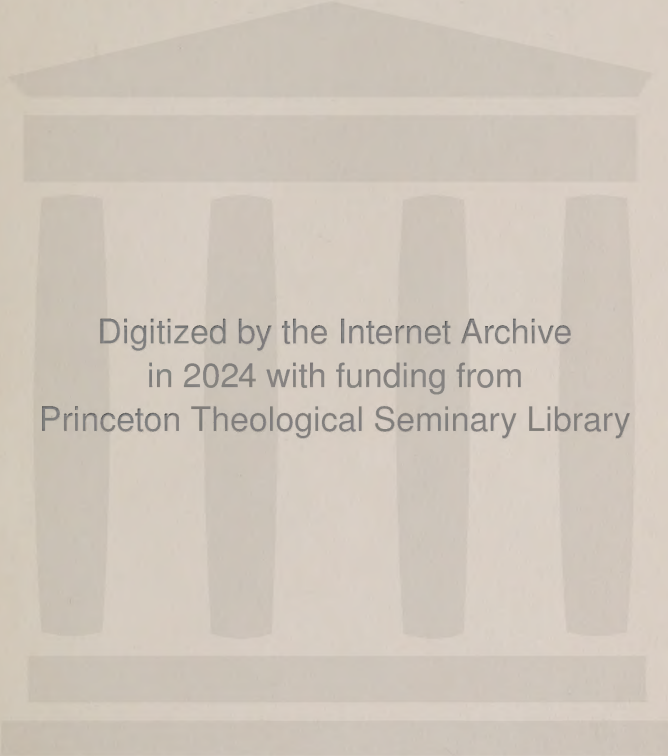


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George B. Cheever, religious
and social reformer, 1807-



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Second Series, No. 69

George B. Cheever, Religious and Social Reformer

1807-1890

By

ROBERT M. YORK

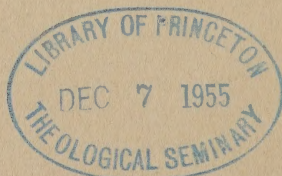
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George B. Cheever, Religious and Social Reformer

1807-1890

By
ROBERT M. YORK

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PREFACE

This monograph is an attempt to reconstruct the life story of a hitherto little known intellectual leader of the mid-nineteenth century. The boyhood of George B. Cheever was spent at Hallowell, Maine, where his energetic father, a Jeffersonian-Democrat of Unitarian sympathies, was a prosperous printer. The father having died in 1819, the mother, an enthusiastic Federalist and Congregationalist, endeavored to convert her son to political and religious conservatism. The former was easy; not so the latter. George Cheever's wide reading in history, literature, science, and philosophy from the resources of the Vaughan (Hallowell) and Bowdoin College (Brunswick) libraries had confirmed doubts concerning the Biblical sanction of Trinitarianism. Though very pious, he twice left Andover Theological Seminary before skepticism was swept away and he embraced Congregationalism.

Entering the ministry on the crest of a wave of revivalism, and serving under Charles G. Finney, the greatest evangelist of the era, Cheever labored successfully at Newburyport and Boston. In 1832 he accepted a pastorate in Salem, Massachusetts, where, as an apostle of orthodoxy, he employed his literary talents in denouncing the leading prophets and principal tenets of Unitarianism. Among his most savage onslaughts were a Fourth of July oration, a review of Andrew Norton's delineation of Trinitarianism, and a letter to the *Christian Examiner*.

The temperance crusade was greatly accelerated in 1835 by Cheever's true-to-life "dream," *Inquire at Amos Giles Distillery*, in which a Bible-vending, liquor-distilling, Unitarian deacon was ridiculed. Publicly horse-whipped, and sued for libel, the minister was fined \$1000 and sentenced to one month's imprisonment. Overnight Cheever became a popular hero.

In 1831 Garrison opened his violent campaign against slavery. Cheever, whose analysis of the Hebrew Scriptures confirmed to him the sinfulness of slavery, joined the ranks as a "colonizationist." Feeling that the Liberia experiment would probably fail, he donned the cloak of abolitionism in 1834. An important official of the Salem Anti-Slavery Society and pastor of a "free-pulpit" Church, he welcomed George Thompson, though others scorned this British apostle of emancipation. Urged to associate conspicu-

ously with the national abolition organization, Cheever declined, preferring to play an independent role.

A breakdown in health in 1836 culminated in a three-year tour of Europe, Asia, and Africa during which he made an especially detailed study of Catholicism, Mohammedanism and Protestantism. Returning to America, Cheever became pastor of a New York City Presbyterian Church. After one quiet year, he plunged into the midst of the battle between "nativists" and "Romanists." For years this staunch Puritan stood in the vanguard of those who sought to discredit the Catholics, to preserve the Bible in public schools, and to win the new immigrants to Protestantism. Catholics were not alone in feeling the sting of Cheever's pen. High-church Episcopalians and Transcendentalists shared the abuse. Lectures on English literature, capital punishment, the Puritan Sabbath, and John Bunyan filled the leisure hours. Overwork again exacted its toll, and in 1844 the minister took an enforced vacation among the Swiss Alps.

As editor of the *Evangelist*, 1845-1846, Cheever opposed the annexation of Texas as slave territory. Insisting that another Anglo-American conflict would be a tragedy for Western civilization, he pleaded for peaceful settlement of the Oregon dispute. Polk was vehemently castigated for his "imperialistic" policy regarding Mexico since Cheever viewed the war as an "immoral" adventure.

New England Congregationalists had invaded the New York metropolitan area in increasing numbers during the thirties and forties. Disregarding the Plan of Union with the Presbyterians, these descendants of the Puritans erected Pilgrim Church and Plymouth Church in Brooklyn and Broadway Tabernacle and the Church of the Puritans in New York as citadels of Congregationalism. In 1846 Cheever was called as first pastor of the Church of the Puritans. Supported by one of the wealthiest and most fashionable parishes in America, Cheever was an important figure in the country's religious life. In 1851 he joined the staff of the *Independent*, and for more than a decade his weekly columns reached thousands.

For the first ten years of his pastorate Cheever was popular. His zealous defense of Protestantism, his denunciations of the "continental Sabbath" and Sunday trains, and his pleas for Prohibition pleased the religious middle-class populace. As long as

he concentrated on these subjects, his future was secure. Since 1836 Cheever had voiced little opposition to slavery. He still considered slavery to be sinful; but hatred for the infidelity of Garrisonians, abhorrence of women as co-laborers, and the restraining influence of wealthy and conservative parishioners dimmed his anti-slavery zeal. With the passage of the Compromise of 1850, Cheever cautiously broke the silence. The strict enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska legislation, the promulgation of the Ostend Manifesto were greeted by increasingly intense denunciations.

The minister unloosed a particularly abusive broadside at Chief Justice Taney and the Dred Scot Decision, and soon gained recognition as one of the most out-spoken anti-slavery clergymen. Henceforth he preached the "Irrepressible Conflict." The American Tract Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions were upbraided for complicity with slavery. John Brown's raid was acclaimed as the act of a true patriot. Any moral action whose goal was the abolition of slavery was applauded.

Cheever's radicalism alienated a large portion of his wealthiest parishioners. Even many sincere anti-slavery members were offended by Cheever's loyalty to John Brown and Thaddeus Hyatt. Others were outraged by their pastor's sanction of a "begging-mission" to Britain. From 1857 to 1861 there was constant bickering and quarreling. Several attempts to oust Cheever were barely suppressed. To preserve control, the Cheeverites established a dictatorship. Two *ex-parte* councils increased the confusion. Both factions were guilty of many indiscretions, neither emerging from the conflict with clean hands.

In 1860-1861 the Cheevers toured Britain seeking \$50,000 for the Church of the Puritans. Though unsuccessful financially, Cheever greatly enhanced his personal prestige, becoming the best-known American abolitionist in England during the early years of the Civil War. He sincerely sought to promote friendlier Anglo-Union relations, to prevent recognition of the Confederacy, and to convince John Bull that a Northern victory sealed slavery's doom.

Home again, the minister urged Lincoln to proclaim immediate emancipation of slaves. The President's reticence to act irritated Cheever who emerged as one of the administration's bitterest critics. After emancipation was announced, Cheever attacked Lincoln's liberal reconstruction policy. He firmly believed in Con-

gressional reconstruction, and prayed that a whirlwind would sweep the South, annihilating the slavocracy and lifting the blacks to a position of equality and perhaps supremacy. At Lincoln's death, Cheever expressed sorrow, but in the tragedy saw God's handiwork that one of sterner mould might guide the nation throughout the trying reconstruction era.

From 1830 to 1865 Cheever was engaged in controversy. As a critic of Unitarianism he received much publicity, but accomplished little. As a temperance crusader his tract on Deacon Giles was monumental and contributed much to the movement's success. As the protagonist of evangelical Protestantism, he fought a vigorous but losing battle, for Catholicism's growth was not allayed. As an anti-slavery clergyman he earned the title "Isaiah" of the abolition movement, and if one believes in the "Irrepressible Conflict," Cheever, though unpopular, performed yeoman service. His trenchant hostility to Lincoln and hearty endorsement of Radical reconstruction are not so commendable. Yet through it all, Cheever was sincere and strove valiantly to bring his country into harmony with God's word as revealed in the Old Testament.

In virtual retirement after 1865 and never again a figure of national importance, Cheever still maintained his keen interest in the world around him. An occasional lecture, sermon, article and especially family correspondence revealed the old fire on the old familiar themes. Congressional reconstruction under Radical control was equated with the negro's best interests. Corruption in government at all levels and growing materialism in American society evoked stern reminders of God's vengeance upon a straying people. Nor did religious controversy disappear. Sometimes it was his own dispute, sometimes it was brother Henry's. Other times it was between various Protestant sects and always there was the larger struggle between Catholics and Protestants. To the end of his life, despite family sickness, old age and apparent defeat he persevered in the fight to make America conform to his own Puritanical beliefs.

Several thousand unpublished letters, over one hundred books, articles, and pamphlets written by Cheever, and the files of the *New York Observer*, *Evangelist*, *Independent*, *Principia*, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, and of the leading metropolitan dailies have constituted the main sources from which the minister's life has been reconstructed and interpreted. Nearly all of this ma-

terial is located in Worcester, Massachusetts, at the American Antiquarian Society whose officials have been extremely helpful in aiding my research. Appreciation is also expressed to the librarians of Bowdoin College, Harvard College, Clark University, University of Maine, State of Maine, Maine Historical Society, City of Worcester, Mass., City of Hallowell, Maine, and any others who have extended help in the preparation of this manuscript.

I am especially indebted to the late George W. Blakeslee of Clark University for the suggestion of the topic and constant encouragement as well as to H. Donaldson Jordan, Dwight E. Lee and Guy A. Lee, professors at Clark, for their many kindnesses and suggestions. Dr. Guy Lee, now of the State Department, had the large responsibility of directing the initial research and correcting the original manuscript which was accepted as a doctoral dissertation at Clark University in 1941. To the Coe Research Fund of the University of Maine I owe thanks for funds to continue my research after World War II. To G. William Small, Professor of English at the University of Maine, I offer my sincere thanks for the many suggestions and careful editing of the final draft.

CHAPTER I

OLD HALLOWELL ON THE KENNEBEC

Charlotte Barrell, the youngest daughter of Nathaniel and Sarah Sayward Barrell of York, Maine, first met Nathaniel Cheever II, a trader and printer, at the Hallowell home of one of her married sisters, where Cheever was a boarder. This native of Reading, Massachusetts,¹ who had learned the printing trade as an apprentice to Isaiah Thomas, had migrated to the rapidly-growing town of Hallowell where he hoped to establish himself as a prosperous and independent citizen. That Cheever and Miss Barrell were quickly attracted to each other was indicated when George Guelph Barrell, the happy-go-lucky sailor brother, wrote in late 1802: "I think him a sensible man and I do not doubt but he would make a valuable husband and a good member of society, but my dear sister let me confess it, I can't say I should be much pleased at a connexion of that kind and his person—his family if he has any and his political views are strong reasons why you should still keep yourself single."² During 1803 the correspondence between Miss Barrell and Cheever was full of warmth; but politics, Cheever being a "contemptible" Democrat, had assumed the spectre of an ogre in the eyes of the Barrells who were fiery Federalists. In August, Cheever confided to his beloved: "I am not so blinded by prejudice as not to discover many errors in the administration but still think the main actuating principle to be just. That this difference should ever be the source of unhappiness in a connection with me is very improbable—it exists more in imagination than reality. The regard, esteem, and love I have for

¹ Genealogical material was taken from sheets in the first portfolio of Cheever manuscripts at the American Antiquarian Society. The sheets were allegedly copied from an old family Bible. Nathaniel Cheever II, born August 20, 1778, was the son of the late Nathaniel Cheever of Reading and Elizabeth Bancroft Cheever, daughter of Samuel Bancroft of the same place. Following the death of her first husband Mrs. Cheever married Captain Nathan Weston, a leading citizen of Augusta, Maine. To this union were born four children, the most prominent of whom were Nathan, Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Court, and James, Congregational clergyman. See *Hallowell Vital Records*, I, 57 and James W. North, *The History of Augusta*, Augusta, 1870, pp. 501-502.

² George Guelph Barrell to Elizabeth Barrell, Portsmouth, N. H., Nov. 7, 1802.

you and veneration for the honored authors of your existence will ever deter me from taking a very active part in opposition to their principles.”³

In November the romance was further complicated when Cheever experienced a financial loss of some sixteen hundred dollars resulting from the complete wreck at the mouth of the Kennebec of a cargo vessel laden with Cheever-owned merchandise. But the lover was not dismayed. The letter that announced this major catastrophe also predicted in true Yankee spirit the complete recoup of fortune within two years.⁴ January, 1804, was a month of gay balls and sleighing parties which would have been more enjoyable if the “lady of my choice” could have participated.

February introduced another crisis into the life of Nathaniel Cheever. The approaching marriage of Mrs. Ruthy Sewall, with whom Cheever had boarded these past three years, to Captain Arnold would leave the young merchant without a home. Somewhere there must have been a tacit understanding between Cheever and Miss Barrell, for now he bombarded her with proposals for a shorter probationary period. The bride-elect remained adamant, repeatedly insisting that the original schedule of a fall marriage must be fulfilled. In “mudtime” the courtship barely escaped shipwreck with frequent recriminations of neglect and unfaithfulness; but the delay and unreliableness of Maine mail delivery rather than diminished affection were the real causes for unreceived epistles.

In July everything was rosy once more and Cheever turned his thoughts to the publishing of the bans in Hallowell and York, “unless the good Parson can be persuaded to tie the knot without this formal business—but even would he do it, think it best to go on in the old way, as I am not fond of innovations upon customs established by our worthy ancestors.”⁵ Cheever, in common with

³ Nathaniel Cheever to Elizabeth Barrell, Hallowell, Aug. 26, 1803. Although it cannot be proved, it is likely that Nathaniel Cheever II borrowed much of his enthusiasm for Jeffersonianism from his step father. Weston, an influential Kennebec follower of Jefferson, served in both houses of the Massachusetts legislature and on the executive council. North, *op. cit.*, 501-502.

⁴ Nathaniel Cheever to Elizabeth Barrell, Hallowell, Nov. 15, 1803.

⁵ Nathaniel Cheever to Elizabeth Barrell, Hallowell, July 22, 1804.

other men, regarded marriage with a certain "religious awe"⁶ and, in accord with the standards of a society in which divorce was a rarity, accepted literally the words of the marriage vow, "for better or for worse" and "Till death do us part." When the bans were finally published on the last Sabbath of August, Cheever fully expected that the "boys" would enjoy a "treat" since he had always been "pretty forward" himself in "cases of this kind."⁷ Cheever who enjoyed a good time at other people's expense could take it with a grin when he fell a victim to the sport of friends.

The wedding ceremony was performed at York, Maine, presumably at Barrell Grove, on September 16, 1804. If the expressed wishes of the bridegroom were followed, the newlyweds immediately departed for Hallowell where Cheever had prepared a thoroughly renovated home for his wife. This home was a two-family apartment building in which the families shared a common kitchen; otherwise, each enjoyed a separate existence of five comfortable rooms. While Cheever was not a wealthy man, he was from the first possessed of sufficient means to employ a maid to minister to the household needs of his bride.⁸

In the early years of married life the husband seemingly devoted himself diligently to providing the daily bread. There were brief accounts of business journeys to Boston by boat and stage; also accounts of the arrival of merchandise in Hallowell via Cheever vessels. Since Mr. Cheever was exclusively engaged in coastwise traffic it seems doubtful whether the Embargo Act of 1808 adversely affected him. If it did he wisely withheld all comment for his political outlook was that of a staunch Jeffersonian Democrat. Contrarily, his brother-in-law, G. G. Barrell, the rank Federalist, who was engaged in international trade, bitterly criticized the government's maritime policy and at one time seemed on the verge of turning revolutionist: "A few months may make the father the enemy of his son, the sister of her brother, and the husband of his wife, and horrors unprecedented in history may shortly fall on this lately happy country."⁹ Although Cheever and Barrell entertained respect for each others' opinions they rarely saw eye to eye on political matters.

⁶ Nathaniel Cheever to Elizabeth Barrell, Hallowell, Aug. 19, 1804.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ George G. Barrell to Charlotte Cheever, June 24, 1809.

Whatever the real economic condition of the family may have been, vital statistics reveal that the Cheevers, after the fashion of an age in which a generous progeny was an inestimable economic asset, in addition to all other considerations, immediately undertook the responsibilities of rearing children. The first, Nathaniel, Jr.,¹⁰ was born in the early spring of 1805. A new tooth or a playful antic was gleefully recorded for the benefit of the grandparents at York. So dear to his mother's heart was this lad that she really spoiled him, and as he grew older he expected to have his own way in all matters. One day while skating on the Kennebec river, apparently without the knowledge or consent of his parents, he suddenly encountered thin ice and sank beneath the waters without ever being recovered. This harsh blow induced Mrs. Cheever to rear her remaining children in a much sterner fashion.

Before the decease of Nathaniel, Jr., four other children had been born to the Cheevers. The most prominent, George Barrell Cheever, named for the mother's favorite brother, came on April 17, 1807. The first daughter, Sarah B., named for her maternal grandmother, survived only two years, March 31, 1809, to April 16, 1811. The second daughter, Elizabeth Bancroft, bearing the name of her paternal grandmother,¹¹ lived to a ripe old age. She figured prominently in the life of George Cheever and also in the history of Worcester where as the wife of Ichabod Washburn, pioneer industrialist, she was known as "Saint Elizabeth" or "Lady Bountiful." Another son, Henry Théodore, born February 6, 1814, in his eighty-three years achieved fame as a minister and as the Secretary of the Church Anti-Slavery Society. The youngest son appeared on March 29, 1816, and because of a remarkable resemblance to his recently deceased brother was christened Nathaniel, the fourth. Unfortunately, he inherited a very delicate constitution and remained a chronic invalid throughout the latter part of his life. He finally passed away October 23, 1844, on the sea where he had spent many years vainly seeking relief from asthma and consumption. The last child, a daughter, Charlotte,

¹⁰ These vital statistics were taken from the Cheever portfolio at the American Antiquarian Society.

¹¹ Elizabeth Bancroft Cheever, the mother of Nathaniel Cheever, was the sister of the celebrated Reverend Aaron Bancroft, for many years pastor of the Second Parish Church (Unitarian) of Worcester, Mass., and also the first President of the American Unitarian Association.

was born during the year 1818 but she too was always sickly and failed to survive the year 1820.

During this period of home-building Nathaniel Cheever became a leader whose power transcended the local scene. In June 1807, he was honored by the Massachusetts General Court with an appointment as Notary Public for Kennebec County¹²—a position of much greater significance at that time than a similar position today. In 1810, Cheever, well acquainted with the art of printing, undertook a more dangerous and yet more responsible function when he entered the newspaper field to supply Central Maine with a Democratic-Republican organ. In the first issue of January 23, 1810, he stated the specific purpose:

To support the independence, honor, and constituted authorities of our country, every citizen is solemnly bound—and to these objects the *Advocate* is devoted. In presenting so laudable a design, truth alone must be its guide.—Political questions will be discussed in the spirit and temper of conciliation, consistent with independent and decided opinions; but as scurrility, invective and personal abuse are not congenial to this spirit, they are therefore at all times utterly inadmissible.

Despite the abusive policy of his rival, the *Hallowell Gazette*, Cheever seems to have closely adhered to his intention of supplying partisan news in a reasonably impartial spirit. This paper was not unlike others in that it was a four page weekly consisting largely of local and national political news, editorials, slightly-stale foreign news, borrowings from other papers, and advertising. Whether from design or necessity the *American Advocate* did not

¹² Commonwealth of Massachusetts to Nathaniel Cheever, June 4, 1807. Already in September 1803 the *Eastern Argus* (Portland) had been established to promote Jeffersonianism in Maine and was destined to become the outstanding Democratic paper of the nineteenth century. Although this paper circulated in the Kennebec area Cheever and his friends evidently felt it desirable to publish a local paper of Jeffersonian stamp to combat the views being put forth vigorously by Peter Edes who had been publishing in Hallowell or Augusta under various titles since 1795 and was strongly Federalist. See Joseph Griffin, *History of the Press of Maine*, Brunswick, 1872, pp. 87-88; Frederick G. Fassett, *A History of Newspapers in the District of Maine, 1785-1820*, Orono, 1932, pp. 67-71, 178-181. See also Samuel L. Boardman, *Peter Edes, Pioneer Printer in Maine*, Bangor, 1901.

possess the usual amount of advertising—only two columns in the first issue and six in the 1812 editions.¹³

The duties attendant upon the publication of a weekly newspaper were not so demanding as to prevent Cheever from contracting for job printing or from engaging in the retail book business. He frequently completed work for his old master, Isaiah Thomas,¹⁴ and at least bid on several projects for Bradford and Read of Boston. His usual practice was to contract for work over a period of months so that he and his apprentices could execute it without hiring outside help. Nor did he require cash payment for services rendered. Rather he preferred to be paid in stock at a discount ranging from ten to twenty-five per cent. This enabled him to conduct his business without large capital outlay.¹⁵

A different type of activity, the local militia, made demands upon the time of Mr. Cheever. Often in the family correspondence there was mention of Fourth of July musterings and similar patriotic celebrations in which Cheever, as a leader of the militia, participated. During the War of 1812 Cheever received a letter from a Mr. Wood,¹⁶ an official charged with guarding the Kennebec area from a Redcoat invasion, reporting that the enemy had been sighted off Pemaquid and that a landing at Boothbay was imminent. If an attack materialized a rider would be swiftly dispatched to Hallowell whereupon Cheever and his men must march to the defense of their country. In 1814 the British effectively occupied

¹³ A rapid survey of the 1816 issues shows that an average of 6 columns was devoted to advertising. The paper seems to have been successful and along with the *Hallowell Gazette* afforded such stiff competition for the Edes newspaper that Edes gave up on the Kennebec and removed to Bangor. Boardman asserts that the new types and presses of Cheever and Goodale, editor of the *Hallowell Gazette*, and their better educations were largely responsible. Boardman, *op cit.*, 36-37. In the case of Cheever it is very probable that his strong stand in favor of Maine's separation from Massachusetts and his Jeffersonianism enhanced his popularity. *American Advocate*, August 24, 1816, and November 2, 1816, are typical issues revealing Cheever's espousal of separation.

¹⁴ Nathaniel Cheever to Bradford and Read of Boston, Hallowell, Dec. 20, 1814.

¹⁵ Nathaniel Cheever to Bradford and Read, Hallowell, Dec. 6, 1814.

¹⁶ Cheever MSS. Presumably this was Major Abiel Wood Jr. of Wiscasset, a leading citizen of that community and member of its Committee of Public Safety and a relative to Mrs. Cheever.

the coastal area from Eastport to Castine at the mouth of the Penobscot and their frequent maneuvers off the coast to the westward caused the Maine militia to be mobilized at many points. The Kennebec infantry regiments and the Hallowell Artillery marched to Wiscasset for duty in response to an urgent summons from the Wiscasset Committee of Public Safety. After several weeks' service they were sent home without having encountered the enemy. Although over two hundred and fifty Hallowell men were enrolled in the various companies, Cheever's name does not appear on the records. Perhaps ill health prevented him from taking part.¹⁷

In early 1818 the increasingly delicate state of Nathaniel Cheever's health caused much worry for his family. In April George G. Barrell recommended that Cheever visit a warm climate, preferably the Southern portion of Spain to which Barrell was soon to proceed as U. S. Consul.¹⁸ Unwilling to absent himself from his loved ones for such a long period of time, Cheever did find it necessary in June to consult another brother-in-law, Dr. Samuel Emerson, of Kennebunk, Maine, who assured the invalid that horseback riding and blood-letting (the old stand-by) would effect an eventual cure. After other consultations Cheever wrote to his wife: "You see the physicians are as various in their opinions as possible; no two whom I have consulted agree fully in the nature of my complaints, or the prescription to be used as a remedy."¹⁹ The general consensus of Boston physicians was that the affliction was of a "pulmonic" nature. Carrying out their advice, Cheever took an extensive horseback journey to Worcester, where he visited friends and relatives, to Western Massachusetts, through Vermont and New Hampshire and Maine.²⁰ Temporary relief was afforded, especially by the mountain air, but Cheever's general health continued in such a low state that a voyage to the South was deemed

¹⁷ The Maine Adjutant General's Office has a record of the officers and men called into service at this time. See also Henry D. Kingsbury and Simeon L. Deyo, *History of Kennebec County*, New York, 1892, pp. 110-121; Fannie S. Chase, *Wiscasset in Pownalborough*, Wiscasset, 1941, pp. 340-370.

¹⁸ George G. Barrell to Nathaniel Cheever, Boston, April 3, 1818.

¹⁹ Nathaniel Cheever to his wife, Wells, Me., June 12, 1818.

²⁰ Nathaniel Cheever to his wife, Westminster, Vt., June 28, 1818; Hanover, N. H., June 30, 1818; Holdeness, N. H., July 3, 1818.

imperative. Probably the choice of Augusta, Georgia, as the place of abode was promoted by the residence in that area of a considerable number of friends and business associates. The sick man, suspecting that he would never again see his beloved family, set out for the South in early October.

Mrs. Cheever's philosophy in this crisis was revealed in a communication of October 30, 1818:

While cherishing hope, am likewise constantly endeavouring to arm my mind with fortitude to bear the worst, the confidence I now feel in the justice and goodness of my maker, and the belief that he will do right by us, and with us, and for us, that we are in his hands, and can do nothing by ourselves, without his aid and assistance, is my best support and greatest comfort, and enable me to bear with cheerfulness the absence (and a separation) that I should once have thought insupportable.

Mrs. Cheever, a very pious woman, and her intimate friends, next to ardently desiring the eventual recovery of the absent invalid, were supremely anxious lest Cheever should die without the full faith of the Christian religion as interpreted by orthodox Congregationalism. Many were the inquiries as to the state of his mind regarding this highly significant question. All fears were allayed when an old friend, Elias Bond, received a communication indicating that the danger of Cheever's descent to eternal perdition had been removed. This letter revealed that Cheever's mind had been "much exercised" regarding religion since 1815 and that for the last twelve months he had been acutely aware of his impending doom. After careful examination of the Scriptures he was now convinced of Christ's divine mission on earth and his mediatorial power in behalf of sinners; and earnestly prayed that Christ's atonement would operate regarding Cheever's own immortal soul.²¹

Perhaps the vision of an early death provided the incentive for a full and frank confession of faith; yet it was not at all uncommon for several exchanges of letters to be devoted solely to the discussion of religious questions. To these people religion was a vital force, the guiding star of their lives, and to die "beyond the pale" constituted the worst tragedy that could befall a human being. Happily, Nathaniel Cheever was spared this fate for he passed away

²¹ Nathaniel Cheever to Elias Bond, Augusta, Ga., Feb. 20, 1819.

at Augusta, Georgia, on March 5, 1819, in the full glory of the Christian religion—an event which the sorrowing survivors rather philosophically accepted as the loving dispensation of an All-Wise God. In this religious atmosphere George Cheever was reared and it was in his home that he first learned those religious principles that he afterwards championed in Salem, Massachusetts, and New York City.

Important as was the influence of the home upon the character of George Cheever, it was but a part of the wider environment of the Hallowell community. The Hallowell in which George Cheever was raised would startle one who knows the city today as a somewhat sleepy, rundown suburb of Augusta. The "Old Hallowell" (1800-1840) was a thriving seaport and trading center which gave promise of becoming the metropolis of the District of Maine.²² With full warehouses and wharves lined with packets for Boston and the West Indies, with sixteen stage routes centering in its midst, with merchants and traders for a radius of sixty miles making it their headquarters, Hallowell was a busy and important town.

Yet the glory that was Hallowell's did not derive simply from its business activity for in that sphere it was but typical of every new hamlet that had arisen or was to arise in the process of westward expansion. Every community was the selfish rival of its neighbor; each wanted to become the metropolis of its area. True, Hallowell was a bustling business town, but its greatest glory lay in the character of the citizens who conducted the various enterprises.

Of all Hallowell families the most prominent was that of the Vaughans centering around Benjamin Vaughan, M.D. and L.L.D., and Charles Vaughan, both English born, who settled in the Kennebec town in the 1790's.²³ Benjamin Vaughan, Cambridge and Edinburgh educated, a former M.P., and one-time private secretary to Lord Shelburne,²⁴ was forced to leave his home-land at the time

²² Emma H. Nason, *Old Hallowell on the Kennebec* (Augusta, Maine), 68; North, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-270; Kingsbury and Deyo, *op. cit.*, pp. 489-517.

²³ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁴ Emma H. Nason said Vaughan was Shelburne's private secretary at the time of the Paris Peace Conference of 1783 and it was he who persuaded the British minister to treat with the American delegates as representatives of an independent country rather than a British colony. See Samuel F. Bemis, *Diplomacy of American Revolution* (New York, 1935), 224-225.

of the French Revolution because of his sympathy with that movement, which was very distasteful to the Pitt government. Bringing with him his wife, Sarah Manning, daughter of a wealthy London merchant, he settled at the exquisitely furnished Vaughan mansion where he soon established a reputation for benevolence, lavish parties, beautiful gardens, and an extraordinary library. This latter, numbering some ten thousand volumes on literature, science, philosophy and history, was the pride and joy of the family and by many was considered the most outstanding library in New England excepting the Harvard College collection. Nor was the library a mere ornament; rather, under the capable direction of the gifted Mrs. Vaughan, it was placed at the disposal of the budding young intellectuals of the community. Perhaps Mrs. Vaughan's interest in the welfare of other children was heightened by the fact that she was mother of seven, several of whom were intimates of the Cheever children.²⁵ While Benjamin Vaughan was the intellectual giant of Hallowell, his brother, Charles, was a captain of trade and industry, as well as a founder and trustee of Hallowell Academy and a very active layman in the Old South Church. One of this man's daughters, Hannah Frances, was an intimate of Elizabeth Cheever, whose friendship was preserved by a correspondence lasting nearly a half century.²⁶

Another familiar name was that of John Merrick who first came to the United States as a tutor in the Vaughan family. After returning to England long enough to woo and wed one of the Vaughan sisters, he finally settled in Hallowell to become a leading citizen. He too was interested in education and served for many years as President of the Board of Trustees of Hallowell Academy as well as a member of the Board of Overseers of Bowdoin College for nearly a half century. Much of the credit for developing the Old South Choir into one of New England's most celebrated choral groups belonged to Merrick.²⁷ As one of Hallowell's most forward-looking individuals he served on the Massa-

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 73-93.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 95-97; Hannah Frances later married the Reverend Seth Sweetzer, pastor of the Old South Church in Worcester, Mass. It was while visiting in the Sweetzer home that Miss Cheever became acquainted with Ichabod Washburn, her future husband.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 104-105.

chusetts commission which laid out a road from Hallowell up the Kennebec to the forks and thence to the Chaudiere and Quebec. Alas, for Hallowell, this route which was expected to tap the rich Canadian trade and divert much traffic from Portland remained largely undeveloped. Only recently has there been a satisfactory highway to Canada along this route for much of the area was and still remains a wilderness.

On the honor roll of this "boom" period of Hallowell history one would surely find the following names inscribed: Dr. Benjamin Page, the "beloved physician," and his son Rufus, merchant, shipowner, and first mayor; the Abbott family including John Abbott, Esq., and wife Betsy with their seven children of whom the five sons were all Bowdoin graduates. Two of these sons, Jacob Abbott and John S. C. Abbott, achieved national fame; the former as author of the Rollo books and the latter as preacher and historian. Both the Page and Abbott families contributed heavily to the support of the Old South Church. David Sewall, merchant (husband of one of the Barrell sisters); Nathaniel Perley, lawyer; Judge William Emmons; Sumner Wilde, lawyer who later removed to Newburyport to attain distinction as a Judge; Thomas Bond, lawyer, representative in the Massachusetts legislature and Maine Senate; Peleg Sprague, Maine legislator and member of both branches of the Federal Congress; Ebenezer T. Warren, Harvard graduate of 1800, famous lawyer and banker; John Otis, Bowdoin College companion of George Cheever, lawyer, legislator, member of the Northeast Boundary Commission in 1841; Henry Knox Baker, editor, lawyer, legislator, banker, and philanthropist; Joseph Hall Ingraham, professor at Jefferson College, Episcopal rector, author of the *Prince of the House of David*; Samuel Moody, preceptor of Hallowell Academy and business man; the Reverend Eliphalet Gillet, pastor of Old South Church for over thirty years; the Bonds, Gilmans, Rices, Leonards, Dummer, Daniel Goodwin—all representative of the Hallowell society in which Nathaniel and Charlotte Cheever established their home and reared their children.²⁸

The center and soul of Hallowell life, as in most New England communities of this period, was the local Congregational society, the famous Old South Church, where nearly all the fore-

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 112-158.

most families gathered for worship. Whereas a one-hour religious service on Sunday satisfies the average churchgoer today, these hardy pioneers were accustomed to three lengthy services on Sunday, a mid-week prayer service, monthly concerts besides missionary meetings and other subsidiary religious activities. The local society had been organized by ten men in 1795 with the Reverend Eliphalet Gillet as pastor. This gentleman who served the church for thirty-two years was the spiritual guide of the Cheever family during the highly impressionable years of George Cheever's boyhood. Of Mr. Gillet, the local historian wrote:

His pastorate presents an example of the typical old-time ministry, when a candidate, once accepted, was practically ordained for life. In those days, the talents of the minister were exalted; his virtues were revered; his follies and weaknesses . . . were charitably condoned. The man was apotheosized by his office. His authority was unquestioned, and the dignity of his position remained unassailable. . . .²⁹

The Cheevers always maintained a firm friendship with the Gillet family and in the parson's declining years were able to minister very acceptably to the material needs of a family whose life had been dedicated to the service of others.

In a period of religious ferment with Protestantism divided into separate, aggressive sects the Congregationalists were not allowed to dominate the religious life of Hallowell without challenge. The Baptists organized a society in 1807 and erected a church in 1821; the Methodists organized in 1793 but were unable to muster enough strength to build a church till 1825. During George Cheever's boyhood these two societies were frowned upon by "the" people of Hallowell, and it was not until evangelistic fervor swept the country in the "twenties" that their permanence was assured. The Unitarians and Universalists, of even more radical disposition than the Baptists and Methodists, managed to obtain a foothold in Hallowell, the former in 1823 and the latter in 1842. While the growth of Unitarianism was very rapid for a brief time, many wealthy citizens rallying around its standard, the enthusiasm soon died down and the local society disbanded at the time of the Civil War. Even though Old South Church was com-

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

pelled to share religious patronage with other denominations, it still remained the dominant church of the community for many decades.³⁰

With such a large proportion of educated citizens, one naturally expected to find excellent educational opportunities. In accord with the New England custom an elementary school was established almost as soon as the town was incorporated. Here the rudiments of education as contained in the *New England Primer*, *Noah Webster's Speller*, and the *Bible* were provided for all who cared to receive. On Saturday afternoons it was not uncommon for the Reverend Gillet to quiz the children on their knowledge of the catechism and lengthy Bible passages.³¹

For secondary training Hallowell possessed a noble institution, the Hallowell Academy. The board of trustees included the town's most progressive citizens who, anxious to increase the institution's prestige, secured an imposing array of preceptors including such worthies as Samuel Moody, William Kinne, Joseph Lovejoy, John Hubbard, Daniel R. Goodwin, and James W. Bradbury.³² The primary aim of the school was to impart to its students a thorough knowledge of the classics; and it attained such a degree of success that students were attracted from a wide area. Many of its graduates were enrolled in advanced institutions especially Bowdoin College and Andover Seminary, where they reflected great credit to the Hallowell Academy. It is doubtful whether any Maine academy of this period could duplicate Hallowell's list of distinguished graduates.

Whereas most Maine communities were fortunate if they afforded facilities for male education, Hallowell even provided for the enlightenment of the gentler sex. Mrs. Remington's Dame School, Mrs. Boardman's Boarding School and Vaughan Female Academy, although all were short-lived, represented a sincere attempt to cultivate the female mind.³³

Public libraries were as yet unknown in the largest cities of the country; but Hallowell was unusually fortunate to have at its disposal the admirable private library of Benjamin Vaughan. The

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 206-207.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 225-228.

³² *Ibid.*, 208-209.

³³ *Ibid.*, 219-224.

Reverend John S. C. Abbott has left an account of the deep interest in child guidance manifested by the refined Mrs. Vaughan and of her careful selection of those books "best adapted to the capacity of the child." One of her favorites was George Cheever, the son of the publisher whose political ideology was so akin to that of her husband.

The Vaughan library was not the only valuable collection of books in Hallowell. John Otis carefully built up a library of many volumes, some of which possessed great value. In addition there were the local bookstores where much material of real literary merit could be procured. Ezekiel Goodale, a printer, early established a circulating library including "novels, romances, plays, biography, history, voyages, travels, poems, miscellaneous reviews, and periodicals." With American literature still in the primitive stage it was natural that Goodale stocked his shelves with a generous smattering of English classics and outstanding English journals such as the *London Monthly Magazine*, the *Quarterly Review*, and the *Edinburgh Review*. At the same time Hallowell was achieving distinction as a reading community, the leading publishers were making it the foremost publishing center in Maine³⁴—a position which it maintained till Portland's ascendancy in the latter half of the century.

The ink had hardly dried on Hallowell's charter when an optimistic citizen launched a newspaper designed to enlighten the populace as to the latest domestic and foreign affairs. This first venture, the *Eastern Star*, like a great number of its contemporaries, descended to an unheralded death after a brief year of existence. There were other bold spirits in this frontier town and almost instantaneously the *Tocsin* sprang up in its stead. During the heat of the battle over Jeffersonian Democracy and the War of 1812 two new sheets appeared. The first, the *American Advocate*, was founded in 1810 by Nathaniel Cheever who served as editor till 1819; the other, the *Hallowell Gazette*, a Federalist organ, was the hot-headed opponent of the *Advocate*.³⁵ Through the columns of these various papers Hallowell was kept informed, sometimes belatedly, of the passing events on the national and international scene.

Fine arts were not neglected in Hallowell. Music, at first

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 230-246.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 254-255.

centering around the Old South Choir, was the most fully developed and most popular of the arts. The greatest era in Hallowell music history featured the Harmonic Society, organized in 1832 with Paul Stickney as director and Miss Elizabeth Cheever as organist. The society offered its patrons the renditions of an orchestra and chorus, and during the "thirties" and "forties" presented many a fine concert of sacred and classical music. It has been said that Hallowell music was fifty years ahead of that of any other Maine town, which is quite possible for Maine was still essentially a frontier state. For a brief time, at least, the theatre flourished on the banks of the Kennebec and at a structure erected on "Hinckley Plains" a Boston stock company for several seasons contributed the usual repertoire of Shakespeare and comedy. Hallowell also boasted a lyceum whose local zenith was not reached till the 1850's, after the Cheevers had permanently left the town.³⁶

Gay parties in abundance served to break the monotony and drabness of everyday life. The bountiful hospitality of the Vaughans, the Pages, and others was famous throughout the District of Maine. Dancing and a "feast" at which long tables were laden "with every sort of delicacy from a roast pig and a roast turkey to a barbery tart" were the chief attractions at these celebrations. The temperance movement had not yet gained popular acceptance; so liquor flowed freely even in the best society and the most pious families. Besides these more formal parties there were frequent gatherings at which conversation was the center of attraction and at which refreshments were limited to coffee and cake.³⁷ While the Cheevers probably attended many of the former type it seems reasonable to believe that the latter more closely corresponded to Mrs. Cheever's conservative tastes. Although never specifically mentioned by the Cheevers, there must have been corn-huskings, barn-raisings, sleighing parties, ice-skating, militia musters, and May baskets. Perhaps they were too busy to waste their energies on non-utilitarian ventures, but it seems likely that they enjoyed the pleasures of life along with its serious aspects.

Hallowell was, then, a busy, bustling, optimistic community

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 259-263.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 266-271; Mrs. Cheever enjoyed company and especially during George Cheever's Bowdoin College years always had a house full of guests.

whose material prosperity rested upon shipping and trading and whose cultural glory was grounded in the character of its citizenry. Inevitably beset with the crudities of the frontier, Hallowell was fortunate to have the compensating refinements which only the larger communities were wont to enjoy. Hallowell's relative importance in early Maine history can more readily be appreciated when it is remembered that its 1821 population was two thousand, with seventy-one stores, including three bookstores, two printing houses, and two weekly newspapers. Its closest rival in Central Maine, Augusta, boasted hardly one thousand inhabitants with only twenty stores, none of which was a printing establishment. Nathaniel Cheever as a trader, printer and publisher was one of the prominent citizens of this community; and the training which his son, George Cheever, received there was forever stamped upon this lad's character. Many of the trials and triumphs of his later life can be explained by the environmental factor of early Hallowell.

CHAPTER II

A BOWDOIN UNDERGRADUATE

The passing of Nathaniel Cheever naturally involved a major readjustment in the life of Mrs. Cheever, now burdened with the entire responsibility of five small children—the eldest scarcely twelve years of age and the youngest, a sickly infant of only a few months. Although prospects for the future were not especially sanguine, her situation was not nearly so desperate as that which confronted many widows because Mrs. Cheever possessed a wide circle of sympathising friends, a respectable estate, and a deep religious faith in God's divine providence. Surely she experienced occasional bitter disappointments but their record has not been preserved. Her correspondence invariably portrayed a resolute determination to persevere in her ambitious schemes for her children's upbringing.

George Cheever should have been and undoubtedly was a great comfort to his mother in her hour of trial. Despite his youth he was already a sophomore at Hallowell Academy and of sufficient maturity to assume much of the care of his younger brothers and sisters. He was also capable of performing the one hundred and one daily chores that always demand attention in the rural scene. George's first literary effort, a letter to his father on October 3, 1818, was no great masterpiece but did reveal a keen interest in the affairs of the home. The chief topics of discussion were the family, the Cheever aqueduct, the cow, the print shop, etc. Calvin Spaulding,¹ the regular assistant and manager of the printing establishment in Nathaniel Cheever's absence, complained that George was slow of movement but otherwise a "pretty good boy." That he rapidly improved was indicated in a note from one of Cheever's relatives:

The children talk a great deal of you particularly my little favorite. I *know* this is wrong but the little rogue has completely won my heart—next to my own son, he is the dearest child. George is what I call astonishingly improved, in most things discover that kind of judgment that would please you—to his mother very dutiful and particularly affable to his Sisters and Brothers—and

¹ Calvin Spaulding to Nathaniel Cheever, Hallowell, Oct. 18, 1818.

I will give him credit for more attention than I am in the habit of receiving from a boy of his age.²

Among the specific chores performed by George were those of milking the cow and fetching the wash water for the maid.

With increasing maturity came increased supervision of the younger children. When little Nat fell ill with the humours in the fall of 1820, George was delegated to accompany him to an obscure mineral spring at Togus, some twenty miles distant.³ Here the two boys tarried quite some time waiting for the waters to effect a cure. It was George's especial charge that Nat should daily consume a quart of the healing water and take two baths within the same period of time. Both boys were terribly homesick; but were successful in holding out till the progress of disease was adjudged to be arrested.⁴ This was only one of several instances in which George administered to the needs of his ailing brothers. In future years this devotion involved direct pecuniary aid—especially when Henry and Nat were compelled to seek health cures in foreign lands.

While the Cheevers did not live on an economic level comparable to that of the Vaughans, they were well above the subsistence level. Cheever's printing and bookstore enterprise had been financially remunerative. At his death he left a \$15,000 estate which included several valuable pieces of real property.⁵ Rather than hire the labor necessary for continued publication of the *Advocate*, Mrs. Cheever sold it and the book store to Calvin Spaulding for which she received a \$4000 mortgage with 6% interest. From this source she annually received \$240 which, coupled with the rental of business property, gave her a steady income that could at any time be supplemented by drawing on the principal of the mortgage.

² Elizabeth and Charlotte W., to Nathaniel Cheever, Hallowell, Dec. 28, 1818.

³ George B. Cheever to his mother, Togus, Sept. 8, 1820.

⁴ Henry T. Cheever, *Memorials of the Life and Trials of a Youthful Christian* (New York, 1851). This experience so impressed George's youthful mind that he mentioned it in the introduction of H.T.C.'s volume in memory of Nathaniel.

⁵ From a journal prepared by Nathaniel Cheever, Sr., on Sept. 22, 1818, prior to his journey to Augusta, Georgia. Cheever purposely left no will preferring that his estate be disposed of according to law.

From this latter source came the money for the educational expenses of George Cheever.⁶

From early childhood George Cheever was hailed as an omnivorous reader. The familiar story of the small boy eagerly devouring all books on which he could lay his hands was particularly applicable in Cheever's case. Armed with the rich resources of his father's bookstore and the Vaughan library, Cheever obtained a broad general knowledge with special emphasis on the ancient and modern classics. Mrs. Vaughan was so impressed with Cheever's literary potentialities that she personally supervised his reading habits and implanted in his mind a deep love of the "old masters." Probably the works of Burke and Coleridge produced the greatest excitement in Cheever's mind, for in later years he was constantly expounding their philosophies. In the case of Burke, Cheever consciously copied his style.⁷ Cheever's love of reading was ever encouraged by his mother who was accustomed to read to her children so much of the time that a Cambridge clergyman remarked that reading seemed to be "the whole business of life."⁸ From all quarters the thirst for knowledge was encouraged and there were early forecasts of literary greatness for young Cheever.

After satisfactorily completing the courses of study at the elementary school and at Hallowell Academy, Cheever was ready for college at the not unusual age of fourteen. The choice of Bowdoin College as the place of matriculation was no accident. There were several excellent reasons why this institution should be favored over all others. The distance of about twenty-five miles and the reasonableness of tuition and living charges were certainly important factors. At Bowdoin Cheever would be among friends, for most of the college-bound graduates of Hallowell Academy chose the Maine institution. Undoubtedly in many cases the Academy trustees directly urged upon the students the advantages of Bowdoin with which college these trustees were benevolently

⁶ Nason and Fassett both indicate that Samuel K. Gilman bought the paper in 1818 and published it until 1825 when he sold it to Calvin Spaulding. Receipts and correspondence in the Cheever MSS indicate clearly that while Gilman was the editor he was not the owner.

⁷ Henry T. Cheever, *Memorial Addresses in Honor of George B. Cheever* (Washington, 1891), 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

connected. In Cheever's case, had there been another choice, it would have been Harvard; but that citadel of learning had become the fountainhead of the "insidious heresy of Unitarianism," and therefore was wholly unacceptable to Mrs. Cheever. While Bowdoin was not primarily a theological seminary it was regarded as an exponent of orthodox Congregationalism,⁹ a cause very dear to Cheever's mother. Perhaps the clinching factor was the presence in the class of 1824 of Cheever's cousin, Theodore Lyman Moody. These two lads frequently exchanged letters and on one occasion Moody remarked, "It will be pleasant for me to be a brother collegian with you, you have advanced further in your studies, than I had when I went to Gorham. I hope you will take encouragement and persevere next year."¹⁰

Cheever entered Bowdoin in the fall of 1821 but apparently was so homesick that he returned home to continue his college studies. Back home he longed for the stimulation and fellowship of his classmates.¹¹ In March, 1822, he had rejoined his fellows and at once there burst forth a steady stream of letters from Hallowell full of motherly advice concerning frequency of letters, moral conduct, diligent pursuit of knowledge, eating habits, exercises, etc. Although the religious doctrines taught at Bowdoin were orthodoxically sound the undergraduates were not generally noted for their "piety" as measured by the Puritan standards of the day. This situation greatly distressed the faithful of the neighboring towns, and on several occasions the spiritual welfare of Bowdoin students was the special subject of intercession by the various "praying circles" of the churches.¹² Portents of an impending revival or rumors of widespread college pranks were signals for a veritable flood of admonitory communications. In June of the freshman year a Government (the college authorities) investigation of student gambling culminated in several suspensions, fines, and expulsions.¹³ Not having heard from George recently Mrs. Cheever gave vent to her wildest misapprehensions and practically accused her son of participating in the "disgraceful affair." George

⁹ Louis C. Hatch, *The History of Bowdoin College* (Portland, 1927), 405.

¹⁰ Theodore L. Moody to G. B. C., Brunswick, Oct. 28, 1820.

¹¹ T. L. Moody to G. B. C., Brunswick, Dec. 10, 1821.

¹² Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, Mar. 2, 1824

¹³ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, June 4, 1822.

promptly denied all complicity and advised his mother that infrequent epistles must not be construed as evidence of purposeful concealment of unpleasanties.¹⁴ "Pressure of college duties" rather than misconduct was the culprit and in Cheever's case the former connoted *studying*, rather than attendance upon extra-curricular activities of which there were none of an organized nature.

George Cheever had entered Bowdoin College as a member of the class destined to become the most celebrated in the history of the institution. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Jonathan Cilley, James W. Bradbury, Patrick H. Greenleaf and John S. C. Abbott were of the group that enrolled with Cheever in the fall of 1821. At the beginning of the sophomore year the number was augmented by the entrance of Henry W. Longfellow bringing the class total to forty-four.¹⁵

In a small college the students necessarily became more or less familiarly acquainted with one another. With George Cheever the emphasis was definitely upon the *less* for his classmates have testified that he led a relatively solitary life. Cheever's own correspondence mentioned scarcely a dozen of his fellow students during the entire four years. Those most frequently referred to were his cousin, T. L. Moody, John M. Wilson, Joseph Eveleth, Calvin Stowe, Peter Brinsmade, and Jonathan Rowland. The first three were one-time room-mates, Stowe was secretary and president of the Peucinian Society, and Brinsmade and Rowland, former associates at Hallowell Academy. At no time was there any mention of Franklin Pierce, H. W. Longfellow, or Nathaniel Hawthorne. Perhaps it was from deliberate choice that Cheever refrained from any intimacy with Hawthorne,¹⁶ who belonged to the "Eat, Drink, and Be Merry Club" upon which Cheever, as a prominent member of the "praying circle," frowned. With Longfellow the relationships must have been cordial. Both were members of the Peucinian Society, the most aristocratic and learned of the two Bowdoin literary societies; whereas Pierce and Hawthorne had joined the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ George L. Austin, *Henry W. Longfellow—His Life, His Works, His Friendships* (Boston, 1888), 62.

¹⁶ Manning Hawthorne, "Nathaniel Hawthorne at Bowdoin," *New England Quarterly*, XIII (June 1, 1940), 246-279.

more social society, the Athenaeum.¹⁷ Cheever recalled the early days when writing to a friend at the time of Longfellow's death: "It will bring a flood of tender associations and memories of scenes, conversations, studies, walks, friendships to mind, and so long long ago, of which he was quite the central spirit and attraction; so gentle, genial, refined, and in the budding of that great poetical genius which since then for more than fifty years has been gradually blossoming to perfection."¹⁸ This early friendship broadened in the years following graduation with frequent exchanges of letters exhibiting a high degree of mutual respect.

It is to be lamented that one who later acquired a reputation for sharpness of tongue and fixed opinions did not more fully record his impressions of the faculty. To be sure there were frequent references of a minor nature to President Allen and Parker Cleaveland but there was detailed description of only one—Thomas C. Upham, who became Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy in 1824.

William Allen, President of Bowdoin from 1820 to 1839, was never popular with students or professors. Eminently learned and an author of note, he was, according to Louis C. Hatch, more fitted for a "research professor in a university" than for the position of "president of a small college." Especially strong in discipline and conscious of the respect due a College President, he was so intensely disliked by the Class of 1825 that half of them refused to attend the commencement reception given by him in honor of the graduates.¹⁹ Cheever, several times, ran afoul of Allen's disciplinary measures, usually for the very capital offense of failure to return to college on the first day following vacation. On such occasions Cheever was penalized by the forfeiture of a portion of the next college recess.²⁰

The oldest professor in point of service was Parker Cleaveland, who had come to Bowdoin in 1805 as instructor in mathematics and natural and experimental philosophy.²¹ In those days the universal scientist was the rule rather than the exception; and

¹⁷ Hatch, *Bowdoin*, 309.

¹⁸ G. B. C. to a classmate. No date.

¹⁹ Hatch, *Bowdoin*, 48.

²⁰ G. B. C. to his mother, May 12, 1824.

²¹ Hatch, *Bowdoin*, 28-29.

Cleaveland had soon branched out into chemistry and mineralogy. In the latter field he was generally recognized as a pioneer. His geological museum at Brunswick was a great curiosity to the college students and the general public. George Cheever wrote an account of a visit to this strange and awe-inspiring laboratory:

We saw Prof. Cleaveland's cabinet, in which are a great many curiosities, among which are a large alligator and two other foreign fish in a complete state of preservation. We then entered his collection of minerals which is a beautiful place. . . . Each mineral is placed in a separate Paper Box, made for the purpose. The room in which they are contained is as large as Mr. Spaulding's Bookstore, and is entirely filled. I hope you will have an opportunity at some future time of seeing it with me. . . .²²

Cheever attained distinction in mathematics at Bowdoin and there is no reason for believing that he did not share the prevailing opinion of Professor Cleaveland as one of Bowdoin's most beloved and greatest teachers. Perhaps Cheever's study of science and geology intensified some of the religious doubts which he was entertaining at this particular period of life.

Samuel P. Newman, Professor of Greek and Latin from 1819 to 1824, when he accepted the newly created post of Rhetoric and Oratory, initiated Cheever into the mysteries of the ancient languages on the college level. Horace, Juvenal, and Cicero served as texts in Latin as did Dalzell's *Collectanea Graeca Majorca* in Greek.²³ When Newman relinquished the language post he was succeeded by Alpheus S. Packard who remained on the faculty for sixty-five years, supposedly a record in the annals of American education.²⁴ In 1822 William Smyth had joined the group as professor in Greek and Mathematics.²⁵ Smyth was a prominent Congregationalist, anti-slavery enthusiast and temperance advocate and may have greatly influenced Cheever. The last professor to be established at Bowdoin during Cheever's matriculation was T. C. Upham²⁶ who temporarily at least impressed George Cheever. Upham had come to Bowdoin at the recommendation of Professor

²² G. B. C. to his mother, June 11, 1824.

²³ Hatch, *Bowdoin*, 23, 49.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 58-60.

Stuart of Andover Theological Seminary as the one man equipped to combat the doctrines of Coleridge, Cousin and Kant which were threatening to undermine New England orthodoxy. After hearing Upham deliver a Biblical lecture in the Brunswick Congregational Church, Cheever wrote to his mother:

If we ever had or ever shall have an acquisition to our College he is one. Though he has been here but a few weeks, he is even now really beloved by the students. He takes almost a paternal interest in our welfare and there seems to be nothing of selfishness mingled with it. He does not put on any of those distant, authoritative airs which the rest of the government with one or two exceptions are so fond of doing. He has preached once for Mr. Mead and in my life I never heard a sermon that was half equal to it. His prayers are the best I ever heard uttered. They are conveyed in beautiful language, but what is more they breathe a spirit of sincere and unaffected piety—far removed from the least superstition or austerity and yet full of fervency and ardour. In fine we are all delighted with him and we shall always continue to love him as well, if, as a student wisely remarked, 'if the rest of the government do not spoil him.'²⁷

Although Cheever admired Professor Upham it was quite evident that there were some faculty members for whom he spared no affection.

It has been stated that Cheever had few college intimates. There were probably several reasons for this, including an intense devotion to his home, a dogged determination to achieve a mark as a scholar, and his deep religious feelings, embracing a great fear of worldliness. For many years Cheever was afflicted with homesickness, not only at Bowdoin but later at Andover. Each time he returned to school he would really be sick for a few days and at times his illness lasted weeks. Probably this was the reason he went home in the fall of 1821 prior to the regular December vacation. On June 4, 1822, after having been at school a considerable period of time he still complained of homesickness, and on June 11 he wrote: "But it would I think be rather unnatural if I was not homesick to some degree: surrounded as I have always been with every blessing and comfort which can render life agreeable. . . ." In order to help him over these difficult periods his mother was accustomed to send boxes of gingerbread and other "goodies."

²⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, Mar. 20, 1824.

If his illness became unbearable he was allowed to seek President Allen's permission for a visit of a few days to Hallowell.²⁸

Regarding Cheever's diligence as a student John S. C. Abbott, a classmate, once said: "My most vivid impression of him during our four years of college life was in seeing him cross the yard with his arms full of books."²⁹ Calvin E. Stowe, one of the few Cheever intimates, husband of Harriett Beecher, and professor at Bowdoin, corroborated this statement with the assertion that "it is fifty dollars damage to the College to have any themes assigned to Cheever to write upon for he examines every book on every shelf to see if by any possibility he can find a sentence which throws light upon the subject."³⁰ Another classmate, the Reverend David Shepley, comparing Longfellow with Cheever, remarked, "Longfellow was more like his fellow-students and more with them. Librarians if not as intimate with him as with Cheever, still knew Longfellow."³¹ These testimonies bear out the assertion that Cheever led a solitary life of careful, industrious, conscientious application to the primary function of college life: so much so in fact that today he would derisively be termed a "greasy grind." All through his college career Cheever maintained a high level of scholarship and graduated in the highest bracket of his class with the reward of membership in the Phi Beta Kappa chapter inaugurated at Bowdoin in 1825.

Extracurricular activities, with the exception of the literary societies, did not exist on the Bowdoin campus of 1821-1825. Even if they had, it is doubtful whether Cheever would have been a participant, so closely did he confine himself to his studies. Athletics also were unknown. About the only means by which a student could get necessary exercise was through walking under the pines or along the river bank, horse-back riding, fishing, hunting,

²⁸ On Dec. 28, 1822, Mrs. Cheever gave consent to a short vacation: "I am gratified that you are so much attached to home but regret that you do not find sufficient pleasure in the pursuit of knowledge to render you more happy at B. Hope that in time you will be better contented. . . ."

²⁹ Henry T. Cheever, *Memorial Address*, 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Austin, *Longfellow*, 76. Longfellow fifty years later referred to Cheever as the "St. John in College" and eminently qualified to be the orator at the golden anniversary of the class of 1825. Samuel P. Benson to G. B. C., Dec. 1, 1879.

or sawing wood. To a generation accustomed to coal and oil-burning stoves the spectacle of a yard full of sweating students with bucksaws in hand would be a rare treat. Yet for Cheever's college mates it was an ordinary occurrence, for wood-sawing was the favorite method of exercise. One reason for its popularity was that each student supplied his own wood and in order to save money personally cut and fitted the wood. Wood-sawing, horse-back riding and walking were Cheever's most frequent forms of recreation.

Like most college youths Cheever was occasionally "hard-up" for finances. Toward the end of his freshman year he dispatched an urgent appeal to Hallowell for more funds.³² His mother must have questioned his thriftiness, for ten days later he wrote: "I hope you do not think that I have expended it extravagantly. . . . I was obliged to procure several articles for my room, which I found necessary; among them were a Lamp, an oilholder, oil, a Looking glass, two Pitchers, Tumblers, Paper, etc., which amounted to almost three dollars, besides several other smaller articles. You may be assured that I shall not expend any money unnecessarily, or for things which will be of no advantage."³³ Another instance of financial embarrassment occurred at the close of his sophomore year when he received his term bill. "I was perfectly astonished and bewildered to find I had got so much to pay the Government. My term bill, as were all the others, was 35 dollars. Instead of 10, I shall therefore need fifteen more."³⁴

In order to lighten the financial burden of his mother, George contracted to serve as schoolmaster in a rural district near Hallowell during the long winter recesses of his sophomore and junior years.³⁵ He was anxious to repeat the performance again in his senior year, but the Government refused to permit him to take any time out of the latter part of the fall term; consequently he was forced to give up the project, remarking, "They have made it a law not to let any but poor students instruct during term time, and through the kindness of Providence, I am not under the necessity

³² G. B. C. to his mother, June 30, 1822.

³³ G. B. C. to his mother, July 9, 1822.

³⁴ G. B. C. to his mother, Sept. 3, 1823.

³⁵ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, Feb. 28, 1823; Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, March 2, 1824.

of making poverty a plea.”³⁶ More properly the thanks should have been bestowed upon the business acumen of Nathaniel Cheever, whose industry had provided the funds for his son’s college education.

During his freshman year Cheever had roomed off campus with a student named Wilson.³⁷ They dwelt in a bare unfurnished room in which they had to supply their own heat and furniture. While the college expenses of tuition and fees were low, these little incidentals rapidly increased the total cost of education. At the close of the first year (August, 1822) Cheever and Joseph Eveleth³⁸ of Augusta, his projected roommate for the sophomore year, petitioned the government for a room in the college dormitory. Cheever described these rooms in glowing terms: “They are really elegant; each room has a Bedchamber attached to it, and the floors are to be painted.”³⁹ Measured by present-day standards even these rooms were “substandard,” but to Cheever they represented a marvelous improvement over the domicile of his freshman year.

With the reopening of college Cheever and Eveleth for some reason did not room together so Theodore Lyman Moody, the Portland cousin, came in with Cheever. Evidently blood was not “thicker than water” and quarrels frequently occurred. Nevertheless, they managed to struggle through the fall term together, both fully expecting to change at the beginning of a new semester. Returning in February it was discovered that the government had very unceremoniously assigned Packard, who had agreed to room with Cheever, to another room. Consequently Cheever and his cousin were back together again.⁴⁰ This time they were more successful in their relationships and with the passage of time both seemed to derive increasing enjoyment from each other’s company. In fact they continued as roommates till Moody’s graduation in 1824. During his senior year Cheever lived with his old Hallowell associate, Brinsmade,⁴¹ of whom he always spoke in the highest terms.

³⁶ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, Nov. 14, 1824.

³⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, July 22, 1822.

³⁸ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, Aug. 6, 1822.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, Feb. 28, 1823.

⁴¹ Mrs. Cheever to G.B.C., Hallowell, Oct. 15, 1824.

It is impossible to go through four years of college without at some time joining in the college "fun." George Cheever left accounts of two instances in which the students went on rampages much to the annoyance and horror of the good Christian people of the State of Maine who felt that college students must always act like little angels. The first of these student uprisings occurred near the end of the sophomore year:

We have been, for a fortnight past, in a continued state of tumult and suspense. In that time there have been no less than seven suspensions, expulsions, and other punishments inflicted on the students. The beginning of all this turmoil was as follows: A party of the most respectable scholars, thinking it would be "fine fun" if they could deceive their fellow students, retired into the woods and about ten o'clock, raised an alarm that the "Yagers" (people from the lower part of town) had come out against them. We all immediately sallied forth, armed with stout clubs.

Soon the college authorities were aroused and ordered all students to their rooms. In the confusion some of the professors were insulted. Several windows were broken in the proctor's room. One student was reprimanded by public confession in chapel, others were suspended and some seniors were deprived of their degrees. Cheever's participation apparently was limited to the expulsion of the "yager" invasion, but he must have enjoyed it immensely for he concluded, "these occurrences, by adding to it the charm of novelty, have made the time of late pass rapidly away."⁴²

The second affair, the famous "tornado," occurred in the spring of the junior year and attracted considerable attention throughout the State. From John Otis of Hallowell, Cheever received a plea for an investigation by the "more respectable and popular fellows" that the "responsible parties" might be apprehended and Bowdoin saved from "hopeless disgrace." After being showered with several similar letters from Hallowell, Cheever sat down to his desk to give the home-folks the "low-down" on the situation:

From what you and Mr. Otis have said upon this subject I am led to think that you suppose the students of this term are particularly dissipated and ungovernable, but it is far from being the

⁴² G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, July 20, 1823.

case. Our college is in a much better state than you are aware of. I have no doubt that the accounts you have heard are half of them false and others greatly exaggerated and that your fears are in a great measure groundless. There never was a time when the students appeared to attend so closely to their studies as they do now. It is true that there have been some slight disturbances but these have excited no noise nor astonishment within our walls, although so much has been said abroad respecting them. Such things as the blowing up of a torpedo are confined entirely to one or two of the worst and most foolish fellows in College.⁴³

Then Cheever unfolded the details of the wrecking by the enraged students of a "miserable old shed" which had recently been moved from another part of town to a corner of the College campus directly opposite Professor Cleaveland's home. The demolition was consummated by a large body of students and the owner was compensated for his damage. Although an *awful* sense of the guilt of wrongdoing restrained Cheever, he apparently knew a great deal about the inner-workings of several student fracas.

From the day George Cheever first set forth for Brunswick there were countless solicitations concerning his religious feelings with special emphasis upon the necessity of positive conversion to the Christian life. Cheever was undoubtedly more pious than most of his classmates; but until he should experience a rebirth in Christ he was excluded from the kingdom of heaven. To his mother and her many friends entrance into heaven was the primary goal of the earthly existence. On September 28, 1822, she wrote: "I pray that the fear of offending a Being that cannot look on sin without abhorrence will ever deter you from committing a bad action. I pray that he may grant you early Piety, and keep you by his grace from falling into sin." Scarcely a letter of October and November, 1822, failed to mention the desirability of "early piety." During this same period Thomas Ritter, a graduate of Hallowell Academy, enrolled at Yale College, a seat of orthodox Congregationalism, was much exercised regarding Cheever's religious convictions and constantly bombarded him with expostulations against vice and immorality—often to Cheever's visible annoyance. This assault was sustained throughout 1823 without any marked success. Nearly every letter from home contained some reference to religion.

⁴³ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, March 20, 1824.

A typical statement was: "However *anxious* I may appear for your health, *I assure you*, your moral accountability to *God* is much nearer my heart."⁴⁴ Beginning with the spring of 1824 there were indications that Cheever's resistance was weakening under this steady, relentless, outside pressure. The death of several college friends and a general religious revival in surrounding communities noticeably affected student thinking. On the anniversary of his seventeenth birthday Cheever inscribed a detailed description of his religious views concluding: "I hope I shall be enabled to dedicate the coming year to him, who is the author of all my mercies and to spend it, if it should be given me, in manner acceptable to him."⁴⁵

With his religious fervor waxing stronger he journeyed to Hallowell in early June to attend the meetings of a revival that was creating great excitement. Everywhere the "unbelievers" were "anxious," then "enquirers," and finally were "hopefully converted."⁴⁶ Although Cheever has left a graphic account of the revival's progress he was not numbered among the converts—much to the disappointment of his mother who had anticipated that heightened emotionalism would sweep him into the fold.

College classes beckoned to him while the revival was still in its ascendancy. His mother tearfully pleaded with him to write her "with perfect freedom on this most important subject" (conversion) and even advised him to converse frankly with the Reverend Mead, the pastor of the Brunswick Congregational Church.⁴⁷ Cheever, obviously, was disturbed about the fundamental tenets of Congregationalism. At his mother's insistence he went home over the Fourth of July to attend more revival services.

Back at Brunswick again he became despondent:

We are all dependent upon Jesus for every spiritual favor, but in my situation his assistance is peculiarly necessary, and with a heart so utterly sinful and depraved as mine and so fixed upon worldly objects, I must inevitably become more cold, stupid, careless and indifferent than ever if he does not interpose and grant his almighty aid. But oh I do hope and pray that he will enable me to go forward and will renew and sanctify my heart by

⁴⁴ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, Dec. 13, 1823.

⁴⁵ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, April 16, 1824.

⁴⁶ G. B. C. to S. P. Ingraham, Hallowell, June 12, 1824.

⁴⁷ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, June 12, 1824.

his spirit. If I were once more regenerated and made the child of God, if I loved him as I ought and were truly penitent for my sins then there is assurance that I should persevere; but as long as I am out of the ark of safety, however near I may approach it, still there is great, very great danger of going back to the world; and almost any state would be preferable to this.⁴⁸

He requested that *Pilgrim's Progress* be forwarded to him to help him find the peace of mind that he was now so ardently seeking.

The letters of the fall of 1824 indicate that during the summer Cheever had renounced worldliness and given himself to the Christian life—inwardly, if not publicly. To Cheever this meant treading the "straight and narrow" path of his Puritan ancestors. During his senior year Cheever became a regular "little-evangelist" displaying great concern for the fate of his fellow students. On one occasion, at least, the father of a Bowdoin student requested that Cheever who "had found that peace which passeth understanding" should visit his son seeking to guide him in the pathway of righteousness.⁴⁹ Mrs. Cheever's prayers were answered; her son had professed Christianity. Now she must persuade him that the ministry should be his life profession.

Cheever had taught school for several terms and the ultimate choice of a career seemed to lie between that of a teacher and a preacher. In April, 1825, he was most favorably inclined toward pedagogy and requested his mother to investigate the possibility of an appointment as preceptor of Hallowell Academy.⁵⁰ At the same time he erred by asking his brother Henry what profession this lad considered most fitting for his elder brother. The next day Mrs. Cheever replied: "Henry advises you to study divinity. I hope you will be directed by infinite wisdom to pursue that course that will eventuate in good. You must look to him for guidance and instruction."⁵¹ In May after having ascertained that there would be a vacancy at the Academy, Mrs. Cheever expressed serious doubts whether George would be able to maintain proper discipline although she was confident that the "instruction part" was no obstacle.⁵² Mrs. Cheever definitely preferred that her son

⁴⁸ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, July 17, 1824.

⁴⁹ N. Kinsman to G. B. C., Portland, Nov. 6, 1824.

⁵⁰ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, April 25, 1825.

⁵¹ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, April 26, 1825.

⁵² Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, May 12, 1825.

should be a preacher. When schools opened in the fall of 1825 George yielded to her wishes and enrolled at Andover Theological Seminary.

Bowdoin, like all other colleges of the day, was not co-educational and opportunities for meeting the fair sex on a social basis were limited to vacation periods. Only once during his four years of college did Cheever mention the opposite sex—except his sister Elizabeth. This one occasion was in a letter recounting the highlights of a visit to Portland in February 1825 with his Aunt Wood:

Cousin Sally Wood is entirely a different character from what I had anticipated. I expected to find her a coquettish trifling girl something such as Mary Gillet used to be, and you know how agreeably I was disappointed. She is sensible and industrious, very attentive to her grandmother, very pleasant and affectionate and withal beautiful. Yet notwithstanding all these agreeable qualities my heart, for the fate of which you seemed so much concerned remains just about where it was when I left you. . . .⁵³

Now that Cheever had professed Christianity, his "*heart*" became the number one object of his mother's petitions; but it was many, many years before *he* was ready for matrimony.

George Cheever had inherited his father's interest in politics but not his political affiliations—again reflecting the overwhelming influence of the mother. The "era of good feeling" characterized national politics during the first two years of Cheever's college life; but with the campaign of 1824 there developed the four-cornered fight between Adams, Jackson, Clay, and Crawford. When Adams was declared the victor by the House of Representatives, Cheever was elated and joshed his Boston cousin, Jonathan Sewall, for betting on the wrong horse. Sewall, a Jackson partisan, believed absolutely in the "corrupt bargain" and was enraged that the "people's choice" had been jockeyed out of a position rightfully his.⁵⁴ In future years George Cheever became actively engaged in political affairs, usually in behalf of the Whigs or kindred parties.

Public speaking has always been a prominent feature of collegiate training. This was especially true at this time because a very high percentage of the graduates entered the ministry, law, politics,

⁵³ G. B. C to his mother, Brunswick, March 2, 1825.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Sewall to G. B. C., Boston, Feb. 25, 1825.

or education. Success in these vocations depended largely upon the ability to express one's self clearly and effectively. Moreover this was the golden age of American Oratory, when the orator from some crudely erected platform harangued the populace, swaying public opinion much as the cheap press, radio and theatre do today. During his college course Cheever delivered several discourses to the Peucinian Society, and in addition participated in public exhibitions. His first appearance before the literary society featured an essay on "peevish" dispositions.⁵⁵ This was followed by others on "eccentricity," "pride," the influence of climate on genius (very minute according to Cheever), etc.

His first exhibition consisted of an extract from a Latin dialogue on the death of Cicero.⁵⁶ On the eve of the exercise Cheever wrote to his mother: "I rehearsed my part to Professor Newman this afternoon and 'didn't get screwed a bit.' He told me 'as how' he was very much pleased with it."⁵⁷ His next important venture in public was a forensic on "the comparative exertions of Franklin, Hamilton, Henry, and Jefferson in forwarding the American Revolution and in establishing our present form of government." Cheever's father would have been grievously hurt had he known that the son dismissed Jefferson, Franklin, and Henry with a few lines. It was really a history of Hamilton's exploits. "In comparing his merit [Hamilton] with that of Franklin, Henry and Jefferson it must appear evident from an impartial history of their lives that his influence was greatest and most extensively felt."⁵⁸

Cheever's most important attempt at speech-making came during the Commencement exercises of the class of 1825 when he, with some twenty others of a class of thirty-eight, delivered an oration. His subject was a timely one on "the influence of the revolutions in Greece and South America on literature." Cheever fully expected that the political freedom of these countries would be followed by a regeneration of the arts and sciences. Respecting Greece he looked forward to the day when that country would again

⁵⁵ George B. Cheever, *Miscellaneous Works*. Unpublished journal of Bowdoin college themes, discourses, etc. Located at American Antiquarian Society.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Brunswick, Sept. 3, 1823.

⁵⁸ Cheever, *Miscellaneous Works*.

attain the level of greatness which once marked Greek civilization.⁵⁹ Strange to say, Mrs. Cheever was not present. Her excuse was simple: "I am sure from the reputation you have gained, I should be pleased and gratified with all your performance," but "I should feel too much interested to enjoy much."⁶⁰

In summary, the career of George Cheever at Bowdoin College was permeated with the thick air of religious emotionalism. Dominated by a strong-willed parent whom he dearly loved, he led a cloistered and scholarly life—much to his mother's gratification and apparently to his own satisfaction. When not engaged in his favorite pastime of reading, he could usually be found in attendance upon the many religious functions of the Brunswick Congregational Church. Without forming any intimate friendships he at least gained the respects of his associates of the "praying circle" and the Peucinian Society, including Longfellow, Bradbury, J. S. C. Abbott, and Calvin Stowe. Everything connected with his college activities, whether he willed it or not, pointed straight ahead to a career as a minister of the gospel.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, Aug. 4, 1825.

CHAPTER III

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO ORTHODOX CONGREGATIONALISM: HIS EARLY MINISTRY

The election of the Reverend Henry Ware,¹ pastor of the First Church of Hingham, Massachusetts, to the Hollis Professorship of Divinity at Harvard in 1805, inaugurated an era of controversy between the Unitarians and Trinitarians of New England. Ware, a Unitarian, was very unacceptable to the Reverend Jedidiah Morse, the Reverend Leonard Woods, and Eliphalet Pearson, acting president of Harvard. Pearson became so disgusted with the "growing spirit of Unitarianism" at Cambridge that he resigned to join forces with other Calvinists in the establishing of an orthodox institution.² For a time the "*old Calvinists*" who believed "man might place himself in the way of receiving the grace of regeneration, although he could not earn it" and the *Hopkinsians*, who believed that salvation was wrought solely by divine grace, sponsored rival projects,³ even though both were bitter enemies of Unitarianism. Jedidiah Morse, who launched the *Panoplist* in 1805 to uphold and unify orthodoxy, acted as chief intermediary between the two groups, Pearson representing the "old Calvinists," and Woods, the Hopkinsians.⁴ Finally the theological differences were adjusted, although to the advantage of the Hopkinsians, the more conservative group; then pooling their financial resources they founded Andover Theological Seminary in 1808.

The first professor of theology at this citadel of Congregationalism was Dr. Leonard Woods, a rank conservative, who claimed to be in direct theological succession from Christ through the Apostles, Augustine, Calvin, and Edwards.⁵ For thirty-eight years he retained his professorship whereby he indoctrinated young minds with the fundamental tenets of Calvinism. Dr. Pear-

¹ William W. Sweet, *The Story of Religions in America* (New York, 1930), 347.

² Claude M. Fuess, "Eliphalet Pearson," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIV (New York, 1934), 358.

³ John W. Platner, "The Congregationalists," *The Religious History of New England* (Cambridge, 1930), 50.

⁴ James K. Morse, *Jedidiah Morse A Champion of New England Orthodoxy* (New York, 1939), 101-120.

⁵ Sarah L. Bailey, *Historical Sketches of Andover, Massachusetts* (Boston, 1880), 564.

son, the moderate Calvinist, was nominated to the post of sacred theology but resigned in 1809 in a disgruntled mood, convinced that he had been betrayed by the Hopkinsians.⁶ His position was filled in 1810 by Moses Stuart, the gifted pastor of the First Church of New Haven. When Stuart was summoned to Andover there were no American professors qualified to teach Hebrew nor was Stuart an established authority on the subject. Diligently applying himself to its study and writing his own textbooks as he progressed, he became the foremost American Biblical scholar and the first American theologian to attract widespread attention in Europe.⁷ Francis Wayland, minister, educator, and fourth President of Brown University, once remarked: "When the history of Biblical learning in this country shall be written, and the names of those who have done worthily shall shine in letters of light, who can doubt that the first place in that roll will, by universal consent, be inscribed with the name of Moses Stuart."⁸ This judgment has been affirmed by succeeding generations. Talented not only with a great capacity for scholarship, he was an educator of exceptional merit exerting tremendous influence over the fifteen hundred ministers and seventy professors and college presidents who attended his classes over a forty-year period.⁹

In 1811 the Reverend Ebenezer Porter, a "majestic preacher and Christian gentleman," was elected to the chair of Sacred Rhetoric.¹⁰ Acting-president for a time after 1827, he served the institution creditably till his death in 1834.¹¹ As the institution grew in prestige new professors were added. In 1819 the Reverend James Murdock accepted the post of Sacred Rhetoric and Ecclesiastical History.¹² After a row with the governing board in 1827 he resigned to be succeeded by the Reverend Ralph Emerson. This gentleman remained at Andover till 1853.¹³

⁶ Morse, *Jedidiah Morse*, 120, footnote.

⁷ William F. Albright, "Moses Stuart," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XVIII (New York, 1936), 174-175.

⁸ Bailey, *Historical Sketches*, 565.

⁹ Albright, "Moses Stuart," 174-175.

¹⁰ Bailey, *Historical Sketches*, 565.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 571.

¹² Roland H. Bainton, "James Murdock," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIII (New York, 1934), 342.

¹³ Bailey, *Historical Sketches*, 571.

Woods, Stuart, Porter, Murdock, and Emerson were all conservative Congregationalists although there were slight differences of opinion among them. In order to protect the orthodoxy of the Seminary each professor was periodically required to sign the seminary creed.¹⁴ In an era of religious dissent it was essential that the instructors should reach a reasonable accord on fundamental tenets.

George Cheever set forth for this stronghold of orthodoxy in November, 1825, even though he had not yet finally decided to enter the ministry. A journey to Boston in June, 1825, to witness the unveiling of the Bunker Hill monument had constituted his longest journey and most protracted absence from the Pine Tree State. When he arrived at Andover he suffered a painful recrudescence of homesickness. In his first letter he recounted his woes: "I find I have need of more philosophy than I am master of to enable me to bear even the first few days of my absence."¹⁵ Even the physical surroundings of Andover contributed to his miserableness: "the rooms are completely uninhabitable. They are none of them painted, in most of them there is hardly a piece of furniture, in many of them there are no fire-places, and they are all cold, desolate and gloomy." Rather than endure these meagre accommodations Cheever had obtained a room in the family of Dr. Woods; but so great was his "pining for home" that he requested his mother to investigate the Gardiner school where a position had recently been offered to him.¹⁶

This time Mrs. Cheever did not indulge her son's illness. The Gardiner position was still open but she strongly urged him to carry on his theological pursuits. "You cannot expect my dear George to go through life without some privation. As yet you have met with none, and the very evils you now lament may eventually prove very beneficial. . . ." ¹⁷

The receipt of this letter found Cheever in a happier mood. Dr. Woods had "agreeably" furnished Cheever's room and had

¹⁴ Sweet, *Religions in America*, 347

¹⁵ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Nov. 10, 1825.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Possibly this is a reference to the celebrated Gardiner lyceum which was flourishing in the nearby town of Gardiner. Much information about this school can be found at the University of Maine Library, Orono, Maine.

¹⁷ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, Nov. 13, 1825.

even arranged for George to secure his room free of rent in exchange for one hour's daily instruction to a ten-year-old Southern lad, the scion of a wealthy family. Three other seminary students roomed at Dr. Woods' and a comradely spirit had sprung up among them and Cheever. Mrs. Carter's boarding house had proved highly satisfactory with excellent food at only \$2.00 weekly. Even the professors were "human." Woods and Stuart, especially, appeared very amiable and of "great talents and uncommon piety."¹⁸ As the seminary program settled down into its regular routine and Cheever became absorbed in his work, homesickness vanished—but always to return for days and even weeks after a Hallowell vacation.

A typical seminary day opened with the rising bell at six o'clock, allowing ample time for Cheever to participate in prayers at seven. These were followed by a pre-breakfast walk for Cheever boarded at a considerable distance from the seminary. The major portion of the day was naturally devoted to recitations—always commenced with appropriate prayers by the presiding pedagogue. Usually there was sufficient spare time during the day for satisfactory preparation of the next assignment. Thus Cheever's evenings were free for "reading, writing, and studying French."¹⁹ Evening prayers fittingly closed the official day.

For the first time Cheever was absent from the Hallowell circle over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.²⁰ The conception of Christmas as the second most important day of the Christian year and as a time of merriment and general exchange of gifts had not yet gained the acceptance of these stern descendants of the Puritans. While Cheever was conservatively inclined, he rebelled against the refusal of these New England divines to even acknowledge the existence of Christmas: "Not the least notice was taken of the day here, not even a word uttered in any of the exercises of the sabbath which would have reminded one that it was the birthday of the saviour. . . ." The drabness of

¹⁸ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Nov. 17, 1825.

¹⁹ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Dec. 3, 1825. Cheever had begun the study of French at Bowdoin under the direction of Joseph H. Abbott of the class of 1822. See Hatch, *op. cit.*, 61, and G. B. C. to his mother, Bowdoin College, Oct. 22, 1823.

²⁰ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Nov. 27, 1825.

Andover society compared quite unfavorably with the gaiety and happiness to be found among certain Hallowell families.²¹

Beginning with the New Year Cheever's indecision concerning the ministerial profession involved him in difficulties with the administration. It was a standing rule that at the end of three months all students must matriculate. This meant that they must sign an article contained in the school laws that it was their "serious, earnest, definite, and only intention in availing themselves of the privileges of this seminary to prepare for an entrance to the sacred office of the ministry of the gospel."²² Cheever felt that he could not conscientiously sign such a declaration of intent and informed Professor Stuart of his decision. Stuart, aware that the pledge had not been rigidly enforced, on his own responsibility assured Cheever that he could continue his studies without molestation. Cheever assumed that the matter was satisfactorily settled and promptly dismissed it from his mind.²³

In February when Cheever and Stuart were enjoying an early morning walk along the highway, the professor, who had grown very fond of Cheever, explained that the government had recently resolved to insist that all students sign the pledge or leave the seminary. Cheever refused to budge from his earlier stand and prepared to return to Hallowell to teach school. The Seminary officials held an extra session to consider Cheever's "special case" but after lengthy deliberation concluded "that they could not conscientiously permit any student" to enjoy full privileges "who was not in their opinion, or who did not profess to be pious." At another Cheever-Stuart meeting the professor complimented Cheever on his scholarship, expressed admiration for his talents, and urged him to dedicate himself to the ministry. The Hallowell youth, rebelling against the rank conservatism of his professors, refused to proceed any further.²⁴

Cheever was very bitter that he should be compelled to leave before the expiration of the term, especially after he had been led to believe he could matriculate without signing the pledge. To

²¹ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Jan. 8, 1826.

²² Leonard Woods, *History of the Andover Theological Seminary* (Boston, 1885), 285-287.

²³ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Feb. 17, 1826.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

his mother he confessed, "I would not make another request to such an obstinate set of mortals (except Prof. Stuart) if ten times as much depended on it. . . . Allen, Crosby, Shepley and all my classmates think it is unjust, and even mean in the government to make such a conclusion."²⁵ Looking at the situation from the administrative viewpoint they were technically in the right in insisting upon a literal interpretation of their constitution. Cheever, though brought up in a strict Congregational atmosphere, might have been suspected of Unitarian sympathies. His father had been a "despicable" Jeffersonian Democrat and had not been settled in his religious beliefs until he was at death's doors. The Vaughans, strong sympathizers with the French Revolution, had supervised Cheever's reading. Coleridge, upon whom the orthodox frowned, was one of Cheever's favorite authors. The Reverend Aaron Bancroft,²⁶ George's uncle, had recently been elected President of the American Unitarian Association. Moreover Cheever was known to be sympathetic to Harvard, the spearhead of Unitarianism and bitter rival of Andover. Cheever actually investigated the possibilities of matriculation at Harvard²⁷ but the plan was vehemently opposed by his mother who refused to advance any funds for the undertaking. Mrs. Cheever and the Reverend Gillet both strongly urged upon Cheever the desirability of an Andover residence and the continuation of studies by private instruction. This plan was very distasteful to George and he would not listen to it.²⁸

The injury to his pride was not his only grievance. Cheever's early respect for Woods had faded. Woods was too orthodox. Furthermore, he complained about the amount of wood Cheever burned in his stove. George branded the professor "penurious" asserting that Woods burned only two or three cords during the entire winter whereas the Cheevers were wont to consume about twenty-five cords. Dr. Woods suffered by comparison with Stuart. Of the former Cheever either said nothing at all or else referred to him in a derogatory manner whereas he always spoke of the latter in glowing terms. Cheever was also disillusioned regarding

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ George W. Cooke, *Unitarianism in America; A History of Its Origin and Development* (Boston, 1902), 413.

²⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Feb. 17, 1826.

²⁸ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, March 21, 1826.

his pupil who proved to be "not 'over and above' interesting," "dull," and even "stupid."

Despite his general dissatisfaction Cheever bore no permanent ill-will against the seminary. "Though I am thus obliged to leave before the end of the term, yet I cannot consider the time I have spent here as lost, since I have studied harder, and to more advantage, and to the better discipline of my mind than at any former period, and the society in which I have been is as good of the kind as it could be."²⁹

After leaving Andover Cheever took up the duties of school-master in Gardiner, Maine, where he apparently remained till the fall of 1826.³⁰ Yet Cheever had not forgotten Andover nor had it forgotten him. From David Shepley, a Bowdoin and Andover classmate, Cheever received the glad tidings:

I called upon Stewart [Stuart] a few days since. . . . I did not know you had found in him a friend so interested in your concern. After speaking in the highest terms of your talents, remarkable considering your youth and eminently fitted for a preacher, . . . he expressed a strong hope and in fine a belief that you would again return. He was gratified to learn that you do not apply yourself to Law. These I assure you are the feelings of Wood[s] no less than Stewart and had you the evidence which I have you would not doubt for a moment that he with all the Faculty feels as Stewart uniformly told you. . . .³¹

Shepley confessed that he personally favored the teaching rather than the preaching profession but sincerely hoped that Cheever would take up the ministry because he was so well qualified for such a vocation and loved it so strongly.

On November 1, 1826, Stuart answered a Cheever inquiry informing him that government regulations had been altered so that "*no young man can be continued a member of the Seminary beyond the Junior year, respecting whom there is not good ground to hope that he is pious, in the judgment of Christian charity.*" Stuart's recommendation that Cheever return to Andover at once

²⁹ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Feb. 17, 1826.

³⁰ Gardiner, Maine, town and school records do not indicate where Cheever taught nor do the family records give any clues. His training admirably fitted him for a position on the faculty of the Gardiner Lyceum but records of that institution contain no references to him.

³¹ David Shepley to G. B. C., Andover, March 28, 1826.

struck a responsive chord in Cheever's mind. He speedily contacted his former roommate, Brinsmade, a teacher at Gorham, Maine, proposing that they set out for Andover directly after Thanksgiving.³² Brinsmade was very agreeable to the proposition, but an illness in his family in Connecticut prevented him from executing the plan. Consequently George Cheever alone made his way back to Andover on December 7, with a grim determination to devote his life to the service of God on earth. "My ambition is to become such a man as you would wish to see me, and such a minister of the gospel as God can look upon with approbation, and I do trust that he will guide me into all truth."³³ Of course Mrs. Cheever was elated, but she still continued to ply her son with good advice cautioning him about his disposition and begging him to hold his tongue where there were differences of opinion regarding theology.³⁴ She fervently hoped he would accept the old beliefs without question or discussion.

In late December Cheever was joined by Brinsmade at the home of Mrs. Carter where they were treated as members of the family and were recipients of many special acts of kindness.³⁵ Although Cheever was thus surrounded by physical comforts he had not yet experienced spiritual peace of mind.

During the early summer of 1827 Cheever's old doubts about the ministry began to reassert themselves. Once more there was a flood of letters from Hallowell friends and relatives pleading with him to surrender himself completely to God, to renounce the world, and to take up the cause of Christ proclaiming it to his sinful fellowmen.³⁶

When visiting in Boston in July Cheever attended services at the Hanover Street Church over which Lyman Beecher had recently been installed to mark the beginning of an orthodox resurgence in Boston. Beecher, the most stalwart champion of revivalistic and evangelical Congregationalism, failed to impress Cheever who felt that his sermons exhibited "thought and ability" but by

³² Brinsmade to G. B. C., Gorham, Nov. 2, 1826.

³³ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Dec. 8, 1826.

³⁴ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, Dec. 13, 1826.

³⁵ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Dec. 28, 1826.

³⁶ Edwin Holt to G. B. C., Hallowell, June 6, 1827; Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, July 28, 1827; etc.

³⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, July 18, 1827.

no means were as wonderful as Beecher's admirers pretended them to be. As for Beecher's manner, he considered it "quite disagreeable—nothing mild or winning or affectionate about it." On this same occasion he attended services at the Federal Street Church where Dr. William Ellery Channing, the great apostle of Unitarianism, held forth. His only comment was that Channing's sermons were "little better than infidelity disguised."³⁷ This Boston visit was a paradox to Cheever's friends for while Cheever expressed dislike for Unitarianism he also rejected orthodoxy's most outstanding protagonist.

In August Cheever's doubts reached the critical stage and he resolved to turn his back on the ministry in favor of teaching. To his mother he offered two excuses, one financial, the other, religious. The first problem could have been easily solved. The second was more perplexing.

In truth, I do not yet feel prepared to enter on the more peculiarly theological studies of the second year. There are many subjects to which I wish to give some previous attention, there are many volumes which I wish first to read, and I wish to accustom myself more to habits of thought and the practice of writing. Instead of two, I feel that I *need* at least five more years of preparation if it were only in an intellectual point of view, for the duties of a clergyman. I shudder at the idea of being so hastily and immaturely protruded into the public business of a profession which of all others requires the most extensive and difficult qualification—the deepest knowledge of human nature and the most general as well as severe intellectual discipline.³⁸

He felt that a year of teaching would give him a broader background, enable him to read good literature, and develop social poise. "But above all I wish to be more positive and decided in regard to my personal feelings in the subject of religion." In other words he was not yet convinced that the Andover brand of theology was the one ordained by God in the Scriptures. Despite Cheever's decision in favor of teaching it appears that he spent the next few months in Boston doing research and writing.

Cheever still maintained cordial relations with Andover friends, especially Nehemiah Adams and Professor Stuart. Returning to Andover at the beginning of the winter term in late 1828

³⁸ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Aug. 7, 1827.

Cheever plunged directly into a study of theology and found the subject fascinating. "It is by far the most interesting in which I ever was engaged, and this interest is every day increasing as the subjects of our investigation grow more important."³⁹ Andover emphasized Trinitarianism and as Cheever pursued his careful examination of it he became convinced that his "former mode of reasoning" was "unphilosophical, crude, and incorrect." Satisfied that reason alone could not undermine orthodoxy he turned to the authority of the Scriptures finally being persuaded that Trinitarianism was a fundamental Bible doctrine. Still he resolved to keep an open mind on the question for his convictions were not yet "so strong" as those of his neighbors. As late as March, 1829, he was wobbly; but once he had definitely put aside all doubts, he stood forth as an intolerant and provocative champion of evangelistic orthodoxy.

It was not till April, 1830, that Cheever took the step that his mother had been urging upon him for nearly a decade. Without fanfare or fuss he now made public confession of his Christian faith and was received into the fellowship of the Congregational Church of Andover.⁴⁰ There being no indication regarding the precise reasons that prompted him to act at this particular time, the logical deduction is that he had settled forever those theological queries that had once puzzled him so much. Moreover commencement was rapidly approaching and unless he acted soon it might be too late.

The commencement exercises of the class of 1830 were held in mid-September. Cheever's contribution was a discourse on *Primitive Christianity Contrasted with Pagan Idolatry*.⁴¹ The *Boston Recorder*, an organ of orthodox Congregationalism, reported that the performances were highly creditable to the Seminary. Newspaper accounts of those days were very brief and there was no mention of special merits of particular candidates. From all appearances Cheever had made a good, if not an excellent record at Andover.

Returning to Hallowell for a period after graduation, Cheever

³⁹ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Dec. 31, 1828.

⁴⁰ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, April 2, 1830.

⁴¹ *Boston Recorder*, Sept. 29, 1830. The *Recorder* was indebted to the *Journal of Humanity* for its account of the Andover exercises.

assisted the Reverend George Shepard with the pastoral care of Old South Church. Cheever had successfully fulfilled the requirements of the Andover Association at an examination at Tewksbury on September 7, 1830, and was now a licensed preacher.⁴² Elizabeth Cheever wrote to brother Henry an account of George's first efforts from the text, "Just as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation:"

We thought he could not excel his first sermon, but the last was the best. His whole appearance is delightful, so perfectly unassuming, humble, modest and dependent upon an Almighty arm for assistance.⁴³

In the morning sermon he discussed the world at large calling upon Christians to promote the evangelization of the world. In the afternoon he limited himself to the United States discussing Indian oppression, intemperance, slavery and profanation of the Sabbath. These four subjects were destined to become Cheever's favorite themes for many years to come.

George Cheever commenced his ministerial career at a highly interesting period of New England church history. The controversy which had raged within the Congregational ranks since 1805, highlighted by Jedidiah Morse's bitter onslaughts in the *Panoplist*, W. E. Channing's address at the installation of Jared Sparks in Baltimore in 1819, the Dedham case in 1820, the foundation of the *Christian Examiner* in 1824, the establishment of the American Unitarian Association in 1825, and the launching of the *Spirit of the Pilgrims* in 1828, was still being fought intensely.⁴⁴ Evangelism, which constituted a portion of orthodoxy's answer to liberalism, and revivals were sweeping the country. Arising, largely, in the "burnt-over" area of upper New York State, where Charles G. Finney⁴⁵ had successfully labored for several years, revivalism in-

⁴² Jacob Coggin to G. B. C., Tewksbury, Sept. 7, 1830—a copy of his preaching license.

⁴³ Elizabeth Cheever to Henry, Hallowell, Oct. 17, 1830.

⁴⁴ Detailed accounts of this controversy are found in Cooke, *Unitarianism in America*; Walker, Williston, *A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States* (New York, 1894); Sweet, *History of Religions*.

⁴⁵ Harris E. Starr, "Charles G. Finney," *Dictionary of American Biography*, VI (New York, 1931), 394-396.

vaded New England in 1830-1832. "Wonderful scenes" were enacted in great cities and tiny hamlets all over the country. As an evangelist and wrathful foe of Unitarianism, Cheever early attracted widespread attention in religious circles.

In early 1831 Cheever did considerable substitute preaching in Boston; but it was not lasting, and he returned to Andover to polish up some literary contributions and to prepare a supply of sermons. In May he was offered a settled pastorate at Plainfield, Connecticut, but upon the advice of the Reverend George Shepard, a native of Plainfield, Cheever did not accept.⁴⁶ The first large-scale preaching assignment was with the Reverend Proudfit's parish in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Proudfit was vacationing in Europe for his health and so successful were Cheever's evangelistic endeavors that prominent laymen conspired to dislodge the regular pastor and install Cheever in his stead.⁴⁷ In the fall of the next year, 1832, a portion of Proudfit's society broke away to establish a new church. Cheever was given a call as pastor of the new organization but for various reasons did not accept.⁴⁸

In August, 1831, the great evangelist, Finney, had arrived in the "Hub of the Universe." Great excitement was produced among the orthodox societies. Interest was kept at a high pitch during the fall and great multitudes were converted. Finney was not bound by the usual restraints of creed and his "expressive language," "homely illustrations," personal appeals to the impenitent, and picturesque descriptions of a "very hot Hell" were calculated to win scores from sin.⁴⁹ With Finney, Cheever labored in Boston. One gathers the impression that Cheever was somewhat disillusioned by the tactics of the revivalist. Mrs. Cheever wrote to her son: "from every disappointment you may gain wisdom, and whatever deficiencies you discover in others may lead you to a closer examination of your own heart. I trust you will reap great benefit from an acquaintance with Mr. Finney and while you are looking to a more perfect standard for your Christian character, endeavor

⁴⁶ George Shepard to G. B. C., Hallowell, May 5, 1831.

⁴⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Newburyport, Aug. 30, 1831; Edmund Swett to G. B. C., Newburyport, Oct. 15, 1831; Sweet to Cheever, Oct. 18, 1831.

⁴⁸ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, Nov. 9, 1832.

⁴⁹ Starr, "Charles G. Finney," 394-396.

to make your own whatever you see of excellence in him, or any other good man with whom you may intimately associate. We were all delighted with the account you gave of him. . . ." ⁵⁰ This last statement leads one to suspect that Cheever appreciated the result that Finney obtained but that his theological beliefs were not acceptable. Many others including Lyman Beecher had on various occasions doubted the soundness of some of Finney's views.

During 1832 Cheever did considerable supply preaching, always watching for a desirable settled pastorate. At one time he was favorably inclined toward a call as assistant pastor to the Reverend Mathews of New York City but his friends urged him to settle nearer Boston. In October he received simultaneous bids from four parishes—Greenfield, Bloomfield, Newburyport, and Salem. If the Newburyport call had been from the entire society over which Proudfit had presided, Cheever would have instantly accepted it. That not being the case he turned to the Howard Street Church of Salem as the most promising field of action.

The Howard Street Church or Branch Church, Congregationalist, over which George Cheever was installed as pastor on February 13, 1833, had seceded from the fashionable Tabernacle Church in 1803 when differences had arisen between the church majority and the pastor supported by a minority. After encountering bitter opposition from the influential laymen of the Tabernacle Church, a new \$14,000 edifice, designed by Samuel McIntyre, was erected in 1805 on Howard Street. A revival in 1808 added some fifty new members to the church rolls; but the Jeffersonian embargo, which adversely affected Salem shipping, nearly prostrated the church, since most of its members were mechanics. For several years the church doors were closed. In 1815 it became a Presbyterian society and remained so till 1828. The Reverend William Williams who served as pastor from 1821 to 1831 had built up a strong church. Then a church quarrel between the pastor supported by a majority and a dissenting minority was disastrous. Williams and his majority seceded to Crombie Street where they organized a new society.⁵¹ The minority, still calling itself the Howard Street Church, summoned Cheever to labor as the pastor.

⁵⁰ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, Dec. 25, 1831.

⁵¹ *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute*, III (December, 1861), 272-282.

The church's future was not very promising for it was viewed with suspicion by the prominent orthodox bodies of Salem, as well as by the fashionable and powerful Unitarian churches. Yet it was an excellent situation for Cheever; and under his leadership the Church became prosperous, and for a time, it was even famous.

The Unitarian controversy, which had been smoldering for twenty years, broke forth into a blaze in 1828 after the establishment of the *Spirit of the Pilgrims*. The *Christian Examiner*, hitherto conducted on a mildy controversial basis, was then compelled to defend itself vehemently against the orthodox journals. George Cheever, a frequent contributor to the *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, was not at first conspicuously associated with these theological disputes. The agitation for disestablishment of Congregationalism in Massachusetts and voluntary support of churches was one of the forces which prompted Cheever to attack Unitarians, who were some of the most active supporters of religious freedom. The firm conviction that Unitarian doctrines were irreligious was another strong motive.

Writing several contentious articles for the principal orthodox papers, the *Quarterly Christian Spectator*,⁵² the *American Quarterly Observer*, and the *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, he aroused the wrath of the Unitarians who turned the revengeful guns of the *Examiner* upon him. Back and forth flew charges and counter-charges about theology. Although Cheever's onslaughts angered Unitarians everywhere, they were particularly obnoxious to the prominent liberals of Salem. The local debate was carried on under such titles as *Cudworth*⁵³ *Defended; and Unitariansim Delineated; By a Lover of Cudworth and Truth; Some Remarks on the Writings of*

⁵² Chauncey A. Goodrich was editor of the *Spectator*, the exponent of "New Haven theology." Cheever's first article, a review of Prof. Norton's book, constituted a harsh attack on Unitarianism. It appeared in the September, 1833, issue. "Here is another stride towards the gloomy gulf of infidelity and this volume might more appropriately have been entitled, *A Statement of Reasons Why Unitarians Ought to be Considered as Infidels and not Christians*." George B. Cheever, "Norton's Reasons," *Quarterly Christian Spectator*, V (September, 1833), 421.

⁵³ Ralph Cudworth, 1617-1688, an Episcopalian divine, was the leader of the "Cambridge Platonists." There was considerable disagreement as to his precise religious views, some regarding him as a liberal although he was essentially conservative. Leslie Stephens, "Ralph Cudworth," *Dictionary of National Biography*, XIII (London, 1888), 271-272.

"a Lover of Cudworth and Truth;" *Charity Supported by Orthodoxy: Mr. Cheever Convicted of Ignorance and Misrepresentation and the Unitarian Faith Vindicated*; and *The Charge of Ignorance and Misrepresentation Proved Against "A Lover of Cudworth and Truth."* Typical and probably the most conspicuous of Cheever's offensive volleys were an address delivered at a Fourth of July celebration in Salem in 1833 and an article that appeared in the *Spirit of the Pilgrims* in its final issue, December 1833.

In his Fourth of July address, after establishing the general premises that God ruled the universe, that the Bible was the divinely-given guide of life, that man repeatedly neglected God in the search of personal aggrandisement, Cheever enumerated the causes for irreligion and infidelity among mankind. Slavery, intemperance, and Sabbath-breaking were damned; but Unitarianism was the main target.⁵⁴ Harvard College, Joseph Priestly, the "ship without a rudder," and Dr. W. E. Channing, "that splendid writer and high-souled man," were bitterly attacked for their contributions to the breakdown of orthodoxy. His concluding remarks were typical:

We believe that no expressions used in this address will be thought unjust, by those who are acquainted with the subject, and know the deleterious influence which Unitarianism is exerting both on the mind and heart. As taught in the pages of Dr. Channing, it breaks up the foundations of morals and religion, changes the nature of sin, converts selfishness into a virtue, calls man's temporal pursuits aspirations after God, makes God but "another name for human intelligence raised above all error and imperfection," makes man a worshipper of self, releases him from the obligation even of a belief in Christianity, destroys the authority of the Bible, shrouds man's future destiny in darkness, removes the mediator, and takes away the sanction of the divine law. . . ."⁵⁴

Cheever's *Course and System of the Unitarians Plainly and Solemnly Surveyed* was even more provocative. To support his assertion that "their periodical *Christian Examiner* and Dr. Channing's writings prove that their aim is a complete emancipation from the system of religion preached by the Apostles,"⁵⁵ he pointed

⁵⁴ George B. Cheever, *Fourth of July Address* (Salem, 1833), 56.

⁵⁵ George B. Cheever, "A Letter to the Conductors of the *Christian Examiner* With an Appendix and Notes," *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, VI (December, 1833), 5.

out that Unitarianism "set aside the Savior," discarded all creeds, disregarded the authority of the Bible, aimed at "the removal of distinctions between the converted and the unconverted," and proclaimed orthodox Christianity as an "imperfect religion" which was "unsuited to an enlightened age" and unadapted to the "perfectability of man's character."⁵⁶ Having maligned the Unitarian position to the best of his ability, he turned to an explanation of orthodoxy. To him, orthodoxy denoted the deity of Christ, the atonement by his sufferings and death, the entire depravity of all mankind, the regeneration by the power of the Holy Ghost, and a future state of endless retribution in happiness to the penitent, misery to the impenitent.⁵⁷ These were the beliefs that Unitarians denied and consequently he branded them as infidels to whom the "mercy of Christ" did not extend. Again he said, "Our religions are as opposite as light and darkness. We might as consistently be asked to receive the followers of Mahomet into Christian fellowship."⁵⁸ The entire article was written in a bold, straight-forward manner with every sentence packing the weight of a sledge-hammer. No wonder the Unitarians were furious. To deny them admittance to heaven was galling, to say the least. These bitter exchanges of opinion did little to promote the cause of evangelical religion, although they probably did enlarge the prestige of the Salem dominie among orthodox circles.

Cheever had been called to Salem as a preacher, not as a man of letters, although nearness to Boston and opportunity for writing had figured prominently in Cheever's decision to accept. In order to satisfy the expectations of his parishioners and possibly to flatter his own ego, he planned a series of revivals for September, 1833, and invited Charles G. Finney to join him in the services.⁵⁹ Finney, still feeling the effects of the cholera, and overburdened with revivals and the pastoral care of the Broadway Tabernacle, was unable to comply with Cheever's request. Others who were invited to attend but declined for a variety of reasons were Justin Edwards, secretary of the American Temperance Society, the Reverend J. H. Linsley of Lynn, the Reverend Joel Parker, leader

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁹ Charles G. Finney to G. B. C., New York, March 15, 1833.

of the free-church movement in New York City, and B. B. Wisner, Boston pastor.⁶⁰ Undaunted, Cheever held his services with the collaboration of Dr. Thomas Skinner, Andover professor who had preached Cheever's ordination sermon, and the Reverend Nehemiah Adams of Cambridge. A family friend who attended some of the services reported them to be productive of much good. "In prayer he [Cheever] seems not to know how to cease pleading with God—the sufferings and atonement of Christ, the perishing condition of sinners, the *promise* of God, all were brought up, and if there is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God, a blessing will descend upon that Church and people. . . ." ⁶¹ After the close of the general meeting it was customary for the "pious" to assemble in their respective neighborhoods for further prayer and meditation. "They hardly have time to take necessary rest and refreshment for the body. Indeed, who would wish to be clogged with a body at such a time, if they could avoid it." ⁶²

With no radios, movies, or automobiles to distract them, earnest Christians, during the stresses of a revival, gave their undivided attention to morning, afternoon, and evening prayer meetings. So successful was Cheever's revival that the Reverend Linsley of Lynn requested of the Salem pastor an accurate description of its progress so that Linsley might follow Cheever's pattern in the conduct of similar services at Lynn.⁶³

Revivals were generally considered necessary to renew faith, to enlarge the congregations, and to win the sinners to Christ. In Cheever's church the revival served to cover up his neglect of his parishioners. That activities subsidiary to his preaching and pastoral duties made serious inroads upon his time cannot be denied. So great was the pressure from temperance lectures, anti-slavery meetings, the Unitarian controversy, and missionary sermons before the constituent churches of the County Association⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Justin Edwards to G. B. C., Andover, June 3, 1833; J. H. Linsley to G. B. C., Lynn, August 18, 1833; Joel Parker to G. B. C., Hartford, August 22, 1833; B. B. Wisner to G. B. C., Boston, August 29, 1833.

⁶¹ Martha to Elizabeth Cheever, Ipswich, Mass., Sept. 6, 1833.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ J. H. Linsley to G. B. C., Boston, Sept. 23, 1833.

⁶⁴ George Cowles to G. B. C., Danvers, July 30, 1833. At a meeting of the county conference Cheever had been elected to preach missionary sermons before each society of the association.

that for weeks at a time he preached extemporaneously. Never recognized as a polished speaker, his congregations must have suffered some rambling, repetitious sermons.

His mother well understood that he was not a good "parish minister," and she chided him for spending too little time on his sermons and among his people, and too many hours in his study and on his writings for the public. She was grieved by the Unitarian struggle, not simply because it involved him in unpleasantness, but largely because it debarred him from visits to his parishioners which would enable him better to understand the problems peculiar to each family. She disapproved of long, unwritten sermons and she upbraided him for delaying till Saturday evening the outlining of the next day's sermon.⁶⁵ George seems to have paid very little attention to her remonstrances. If anything he plunged even deeper into controversy. Even with all his extra burdens, he gave general satisfaction at Salem, for his themes were popular, and he was an earnest, energetic, handsome, young minister.

It was only after years of mental wrestling that Cheever had finally persuaded himself that Congregationalism and not Unitarianism was ordained by God in the Scriptures, and constituted the only sure highway to heaven. Having awapt away his own doubts, he called upon others to follow his lead. Unitarians resented his outspokenness and trenchant hostility; and a bitter feud, of which Cheever was the center, raged in the leading religious journals of New England as well as the local newspapers. It is doubtful if Cheever's vehement onslaughts produced lasting benefits, although they may have helped retard the growth of Unitarianism. Certainly Cheever's reputation as a vigorous champion of Congregationalism was enhanced by his denunciations of his more liberal brethren.

⁶⁵ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, Feb. 15, 1834. This particular letter was written following Henry's visit to Salem.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITERARY ASPIRANT

George Cheever's love of literature was reflected in his first Andover expense account, November, 1825, to March, 1826. The largest single expenditure was twenty-seven dollars for books. This sum surpassed the total cost of board for the entire five months. Explaining his extravagances to his mother, he said: "These are, some of them, Seminary Books, and the others were such Beauties, and ones I had so long coveted, and withal so cheap! ! that I could not resist the temptation of buying them nor have I ever for a moment regretted it, though you might perhaps say I *could* have done without them. They have been the solace of my downcast, and the amusement of my leisure hours; and in such society as that of Goldsmith and Johnson, and Shakespeare, and Addison, and Milton and Cowper and a host of such Literary worthies, it would be a pity if I could not make some improvement." ¹

When Cheever returned to Andover for the second time, he was honored by Professor Stuart with the chairmanship of a student committee to prepare for publication a collection of parallel passages of scriptures from the Hebrew, Greek, and Septuagint texts in the original languages.² For several months in early 1827 Cheever was engrossed with the details of this commission which required much more concentrated effort than its sponsors had anticipated. The sum total of material reward was ten dollars from the printers;³ but there was intangible compensation in that his prestige as a classical scholar was greatly enhanced.

After Cheever's skepticism led him to abandon advanced study of theology in August, 1827, he turned to literature for consolation. Throughout the fall he spent many hours at Boston⁴ and Andover collecting and critically selecting material for a volume consisting of the literary gems of American authors. In undertaking this project Cheever was probably influenced by the literary giants of Boston who were so active in fostering a native American literature in opposition to the imported British culture. His Andover superiors, especially Professor Stuart, must have acted as

¹ George B. Cheever to his mother, Andover, Feb. 17, 1826.

² G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, Feb. 11, 1827.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ G. B. C. to his mother, Boston Athenaeum, Sept. 30, 1827.

his advisors, since the composition was completed at Andover. The finished product, comprising four hundred and sixty-seven pages of extracts from the writings of nearly fifty prominent American authors, appeared in 1828 with Samuel Goodrich of *Peter Parley* fame as the publisher.⁵ The editor, hoping that critics would not judge it "inferior in excellence or interest to any of those compilations which hitherto embraced only the *morceaux delicieuse* of English genius," fully expected that this volume of prose would exert an exalting influence on the minds of American youth.

The most numerous extracts were from the works of Irving, Cooper, and Webster. With these selections critics could find little fault, since Irving and Cooper were generally recognized as the outstanding prose writers, and Webster, the "darling of New England," was the North's leading orator. Many classics such as the Declaration of Independence, extracts from Washington's Farewell Address, and appropriate selections from the Federalist Papers were included. The most recurrent theme was religious, death being an especially popular subject with Cheever at this time; this was followed closely by character building and patriotism. Science was not entirely neglected, for Silliman, Franklin, and Rush were represented. Religious articles from such leaders as Buckminster, Channing, and Beecher, political masterpieces by Jay, Jefferson, Hamilton, Washington, Marshall, and Webster, and contributions from the lesser literary figures such as Richard Dana, Tickner, Everett, Willis, and Mrs. Sigourney lent proper balance to the book.

In 1829 Cheever articles were admitted to the issues of the *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, an orthodox organ which had been launched in 1828 with Enoch Pond as editor to refute the claims of Unitarians. Cheever's first positively-identified contribution was a review of Professor Stuart's *Hebrew Grammar and Hebrew Chrestomathy*.⁶ Stuart's work justly merited praise, but the hero-worshipping Cheever characteristically found it a most superior masterpiece. Because contributions to the *Spirit of the Pilgrims* were not signed by their authors, it is difficult to prove identity;

⁵ George B. Cheever, *The American Commonplace Book of Prose* (Boston, 1828).

⁶ George B. Cheever, "Review of Stuart's *Hebrew Grammar and Hebrew Chrestomathy*," *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, II (May, 1829), 260-270.

but it is known that Cheever supplied several, and perhaps many, articles to this journal before its extinction in 1833.

In early 1829 Cheever prepared a collection of hymns which he submitted to the American Sunday School Union. The American Sunday School Union was anxious to publish a new hymnal; and Artemus Bullard, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Union, sponsored Cheever's hymnal before the national headquarters.⁷ Evidently Cheever's work was not entirely acceptable for there is no record of its publication.

Now that Cheever had attracted the attention of the literary high-brows of Boston, he set out to crash the select columns of the *North American Review*. His first effort, an article on Edmund Burke,⁸ found its way to the desk of Jared Sparks, the editor. After careful study Sparks rejected it in a friendly manner:

It contains many good things, expressed with energy, and in some places with eloquence, but as a whole it does not seem to me entirely suited to the *North American Review*. In short it would be hardly possible to select a subject of more compass or difficulty, and I do not think full justice could be done to it, except by a person of much experience in the world, well read in English politics, and accustomed to thinking and writing on these subjects. Considering your opportunities in this way, the article does you great credit, and the knowledge and discipline you have attained in writing it will be a good reward for your labor, should it never be printed.⁹

Although rejection of the article on his favorite Englishman was a cruel blow, it only served to intensify Cheever's resolution.

The first *North American Review* article that can be positively attributed to Cheever was the review of an anonymous work entitled *Junius Unmasked or Lord George Sackville Proved to be Junius*.¹⁰ A book review of 1829 was essentially different from a similar effort of 1955 since the primary purpose of those days was the presentation of a resumé of the book with only a sprinkling of criticism. Cheever agreed with the author that Junius was Lord

⁷ Artemus Bullard to G. B. C., Boston, April 7, 1829.

⁸ This article was subsequently published by another journal.

⁹ Jared Sparks to G. B. C., Boston, Sept. 1, 1829.

¹⁰ George B. Cheever, "Junius Unmasked or Lord George Sackville Proved to be Junius," *North American Review*, XXX (October, 1829), 315-339.

Sackville; but Cheever did not accept the logic of all methods by which the author reached his conclusion. That Junius and Sackville employed the same words did not convince Cheever. "In examining an author's style, it is not the use of particular solitary words, that we are to look to, as if his work were a mere spelling-book; it is the march and structure of his sentence, the ease, dignity, vigor and beauty which they may display,—it is the general features which characterize him, the grand impression which whole pages leave upon the mind, that ought to be regarded. . . ." ¹¹

Cheever now turned his attention from English literature to a native social and political problem of national magnitude—the removal of the Southern Indians to a permanent reservation west of the Mississippi. While the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks grudgingly submitted, the Cherokees, a relatively peaceful, cultured and Christianized nation, inhabiting some of the richest agricultural lands of upstate Georgia, refused to budge. They based their decision upon the rights of perpetual ownership guaranteed to them by United States treaty. The State of Georgia was determined to treat the Indians as her subjects rather than as an independent nation; and in December, 1829,¹² passed a law appropriating a large area of the Cherokee territory, and extended Georgia jurisdiction to the seized area. Other measures were enacted making the Cherokees totally subservient to the will of the Georgia legislature—a "benevolent" institution controlled by avaricious men who already envisioned great fields of cotton growing where once the Red Man stood.

Meantime gold had been discovered in the disputed area; and although United States troops had been dispatched by President Adams to quell disorder, the new president, Jackson, withdrew them upon the urgent application of Georgia. Several cases involving Georgia and the Cherokees came before the United States Supreme Court.¹³ The first case, in which the Cherokees sought action to prevent the operation of Georgia laws upon the Indians, was dismissed by Marshall because the Cherokees were not a foreign nation within the meaning of the Constitution.¹⁴ Marshall

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹² Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1932), 229.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 233-235.

¹⁴ *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831).

indicated that his sympathies were with the Indians, but the path of duty was clear and he must find against them on the constitutional issue.

As a result of the imprisonment of Reverends Samuel Worcester and Elizur Butler for failure to take an oath of allegiance to Georgia and to obtain proper preaching licenses, the Supreme Court was given another opportunity to review the dispute between the Cherokees and the State of Georgia. Marshall in the famous decision, *Worcester vs. Georgia*, set aside the previous judgment and pronounced the Georgia laws unconstitutional, being violations of a United States treaty.¹⁵ President Jackson, who viewed the problem through the eyes of a Westerner, refused to employ the United States troops to uphold the decision. Georgia was thus permitted to have her own way, and eventually the Cherokees were forced to acquiesce in the unrighteous acts of the State of Georgia.

The plight of these unfortunate Indians incited a lengthy debate in and out of Congress with many prominent political, literary, and religious leaders upholding the cause of the Indians. Jeremiah Evarts, editor of the *Missionary Herald*, who from personal investigation was well acquainted with Cherokee conditions, opened a barrage against the government policy through the columns of the *National Intelligencer*, the *New York Observer*, and *North American Review*.¹⁶ Prompted by Evarts and activated by broad humanitarian and religious principles, Cheever entered the ranks in defense of the Cherokees.¹⁷ His first article, appearing in Nathaniel Willis' *American Monthly Magazine*, scathingly denounced Governor Lewis Cass of Michigan Territory for a sixty page defense of the government action.¹⁸ Cass' vindication of Indian Removal had appeared in the *North American Review* for January, 1830.

Writing in bold, fearless style Cheever condemned Cass, the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁶ H. H. Howard Knott, "Jeremiah Evarts," *Dictionary of American Biography*, VI (New York, 1931), 215.

¹⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, April 2, 1830.

¹⁸ George B. Cheever, "The Removal of the Indians—an article from the *American Monthly Magazine*: an examination of an article in the *North American Review*: and an exhibition of the advancement of the Southern Tribes in Civilization and Christianity," *Collection of Pamphlets and Periodical Excerpts Bound in One Volume*. This includes nearly a score of miscellaneous articles written by Cheever.

Review, and the United States Government. Unable or unwilling to understand the political implications of the question, Cheever viewed it solely from the moral standpoint. Believing firmly that there was a causal connection between national virtue and national prosperity, as well as national crime and national misery, he reproached the government for its "criminal" policy which violated God's laws and invited the Almighty to send down his wrath to scourge a "guilty nation." Putting the Word of God above everything else, Cheever asserted that it was the greatest crisis in American history since the landing of the Mayflower, "because it far more deeply involves our moral and religious character, by bringing us to the very eve of the commission of a great and dreadful crime."¹⁹ Distressed because the "New England conscience" had not raised its voice and because the public was generally apathetic, he called upon the Christian ministry to preach a crusade against all sin, including not only the "Machiavellian" policy of Indian Removal, but also Sabbath desecration, intemperance, slavery, and the "powerful machinations" of the Jesuits²⁰—all national sins in Cheever's eyes.

Turning to Cass' article in the *Review*, Cheever expressed dismay that the editor should allow its noble pages to be stained by such a motely array of "absolutely false assertions," "immoral principles," and "erroneous reasonings." Cheever questioned Cass' allegation that the Indians could not be Christianized, discounted the Governor's knowledge of Southern conditions since his personal contacts were mainly with the "degraded" tribes of the Northwest, and unmercifully condemned the statement that Indians no longer possessed sovereign rights. In one instance Cheever challenged Cass' veracity, frankly charging him with "dishonesty as a disputant."²¹ And in another instance accused Cass of "flagrant immorality as a writer."²² The final portion of the article was a plea that the government deal with the Indians with Christian charity and a presentation of enough statistics, gleaned largely from the pen of Jeremiah Evarts, to "prove" that the Southern Indians, particularly the Cherokees, were readily susceptible to Christianization.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-14.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

²² *Ibid.*, 54.

The article appeared later as a pamphlet and was sent out to friends and prominent citizens near and far. Several reprints were deposited in the reading room of the Vaughan library²³ while others were distributed in Hallowell and Augusta by the little missionaries, Nat and Henry.²⁴ Cheever's arraignment of the government created much excitement in the "old home-town." Deacon James Gow, Mr. Elias Bond and Mr. Joseph Lovejoy, preceptor of Hallowell Academy, supported Cheever; but at public lyceum discussion, the opposition leaders, John Merrick and John Otis, outdebated in spectacular fashion all Cheever adherents.²⁵ Mrs. Cheever's reaction to the pamphlet was one of mingled pleasure and dismay. Much as she admired her son's composition she could not forgive him for the attack on Lewis Cass. She justly felt that her son's youth and Cass' "station" in public affairs did not warrant a discussion of personalities.²⁶ On the other hand, Peleg Sprague, United States Senator from Maine, congratulated Cheever on his production, and promised to supply him with additional documents relating to the Indian problem.²⁷

Still coached by Jeremiah Evarts, Cheever drew up a memorial to Congress, copies of which were circulated throughout the country, with the expectation that the local sponsors would forward the petitions, covered with signatures, to the proper Congressmen.²⁸ The primary aim was a reversal of the Jackson policy.

Finally in a short, concise article in *Spirit of the Pilgrims* he analyzed the Congressional debates of April and May, 1830, prior

²³ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, February 17, 1830.

²⁴ Henry to G. B. C., Hallowell, March 15, 1830.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, March 12, 1830. George was grieved that his mother considered his article too severe. On April 2, 1830, he wrote: "I assure you that all its severity was justified . . . Mr. Sparks showed me a letter he received from Gov. Cass in regard to the article in the *North American*, in which he plainly expressed a wish that should the views of the government (Jackson and his cabinet) be at all changed, the article might be altered to correspond with them. He wrote the article that he might keep his place in office. A man that will act thus when the interests of so many of his fellow creatures are at stake, deserves no mercy. Every page of my pamphlet was read to Mr. Evarts before it was printed. . . ."

²⁷ Peleg Sprague to G. B. C., Washington, February 22, 1830.

²⁸ Jeremiah Evarts to G. B. C., Boston, March 10, 1830.

to the passage of the Act.²⁹ A good summary is found as follows: "The passage of the Indian Bill has disgraced us as a people, has wounded our national honor, and exposed us to the merited reproach of all civilized communities in the world."³⁰

Measured by tangible results, Cheever's first venture into the realm of politics was a dismal failure since Jackson resolutely carried out the plan of removal—to the everlasting discredit of his administration. Cheever probably attracted very little attention among politicians. About the only satisfaction he obtained was identification with a "lost cause," and the knowledge that he had taken the correct Christian view of a perplexing national problem. By that select circle of Boston reformers of orthodox faith, he was welcomed as a promising ally. By a much larger reading-public he was recognized as the zealous wielder of an authoritative and relentless pen.

When Alexander H. Everett returned to the United States, after completing his service as minister to Spain, he purchased the controlling interest in the *North American Review* and superseded Sparks as editor. The latter must have highly recommended Cheever to the new editor for Everett wrote to Cheever: "I venture to hope that the establishment will continue to receive your valuable aid and that you will favor us with contributions as often and to as great an extent as your leisure will permit."³¹ He specifically inquired about a review of Stowe's edition of Lowth's *Hebrew Poetry*, and urged Cheever to submit it for the May number. At the moment Cheever was burdened with other assignments and the review did not appear till the October issue. In general it was very complimentary to Mr. Stowe as well as laudatory of the study of the Hebrew Scriptures:

Setting aside the circumstances of their divine origin and consequent moral excellence, the Scriptures of the Old Testament present such a field of curious, useful, and noble investigation, on so many of the most interesting subjects, which can occupy the human mind, viewed under so many romantic, elevated, and interest-

²⁹ George B. Cheever, "Review of the Speeches on the Passage of the Bill for the Removal of the Indians," *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, III (October, 1830), 492-500; 517-532.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 492.

³¹ Alexander H. Everett to G. B. C., Boston, March 25, 1830.

ing lights, and they are besides so rich in all the elements of true sublimity and beauty whether in poetry or history, that they are pre-eminently worthy of the most minute and patient study, which the Christian philosopher or the man of taste and genius can bestow upon them.³²

This comment was not entirely unexpected from one who at Andover was recognized as a leading Hebrew scholar.

Cheever had always been interested in poetry and on occasions had tried to write some of his own. In the early part of 1830 he edited a volume relating to poetry, *Studies In Poetry*, with Samuel Goodrich again as publisher. The purpose of the work was three-fold: to present a book of "practical poetical rhetoric"; to "refine and regulate the taste"; and to "prepare the youthful mind to judge for itself, and to relish with discrimination whatever is beautiful in the whole compass of English poetry."³³ Whereas he had edited his *Commonplace Book of Prose* without annotation, Cheever now introduced each author with a sketch of his life and a critical appraisal of his poetry. The selection of poetry in every case was guided by Cheever's own estimate of the moral excellence of each individual poet.

Cheever considered Chaucer to be the "first true poet in the English language." Like other critics he regarded the Fairy Queen as Edmund Spenser's best creation although he felt all of Spenser's works were "rich, flowing, and harmonious to a degree which perhaps no succeeding poet has surpassed." He rated Shakespeare as the "tops among dramatic writers," but of a bad moral tendency. "His works are to be studied with very great caution and with much judgment in the selection." An unabridged Shakespeare should never be given to children since some whole plays had "a positively injurious effect" upon the reader's mind.³⁴

Cheever judged Milton's *Paradise Lost* to be one of the most sublime and beautiful pieces in English literature. He felt that Dryden's poetry was "very artificial, abounding in conceits and overstrained metaphors," but though he seldom wrote without producing something "false and unnatural" his general conceptions

³² George B. Cheever, "Robert Lowth's Hebrew Poetry," *North American Review*, XXXI (October, 1830), 337-379.

³³ George B. Cheever, *Studies in Poetry* (Boston, 1830), iii of preface.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-13.

were usually "noble" and often exhibited "an astonishing richness and sublimity of imagination." He ranked Alexander Pope as first among the "second class of poetry." Cheever could not overlook the fact that Pope, born a Catholic, had never rebelled against Papal domination.³⁵

For Thomas Gray's "odes," he had only praise. Those of William Collins he pronounced as "the finest lyrical productions in the English language." He displayed deep appreciation of Goldsmith contending that "he never wrote a bad line, and yet never sacrificed sense or feeling to the harmony of sound." He expressed great admiration for the "elevated devotional tendency" of Cowper's poetry. Cheever praised the "truly excellent" in Robert Burns as man and poet but could not forget that "the obligations of religion and morality rested upon him as upon all other men, and that he violated them."³⁶

He classed Samuel Taylor Coleridge with Milton as a "poetical genius," with especial praise for his *Hymn Before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouny* and the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. He further grouped Coleridge with Wordsworth as the "greatest poets of the modern age." Lord Byron, Thomas Moore, and Percy B. Shelley fared badly at the hands of Cheever. He withheld all comment about Shelley although he condescended to include *To a Skylark*. He was perfectly willing to "dispense with Moore's best," if the worst could thereby be eliminated. He felt that "very little of Byron's poetry" could be read "without a most destructive influence upon the moral sensibilities." He asserted that Byron's complete works ought never to be purchased, and proudly boasted that he was not acquainted with them "except by extracts and beauties."³⁷

British poetry occupied about four hundred pages, while American poetry was allotted only thirty-five pages with no explanation. Hebrew poetry received fifty pages in which Cheever explained its characteristics and listed the poetical pieces to be found in the historical works of the Old Testament. He made the most of an opportunity to expound the orthodox view of the Bible as the word of God, "communicated to man in order to teach him

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 45-95.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 131-223.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 280-360.

the way of everlasting life, and the means of preparation for that future and external existence. . . ." ³⁸

The *North American Review* offered an eighteen-page review of Cheever's *Studies in Poetry*. While disagreeing with the selection of some of Scott's, Campbell's, Southey's and Moore's poetry, and complaining that Bloomfield and Graham had received twice as much space as Pope, the reviewer termed them "small blemishes," and expressed general satisfaction with the work. "Though the compilation is stated to have been made for the use of the young, it is one which persons of mature age may read with pleasure and advantage." ³⁹

Cheever's next major literary production was the *American Comonplace Book of Poetry*, 1831, modeled after his earlier volume of prose, with the exception that the poetry book was annotated. The purpose of writing was twofold: to promote the growth of a native poetry and to provide the religious community with a handy collection of devotional poetry. "All the pieces . . . are of the purest moral character and, considering its limits, and the comparative scantiness of American poetry, a good number of them contain, in an uncommon degree, the religious and political spirit united." ⁴⁰ In all his writings Cheever emphasized the religious aspect, and in this specific case, expressed the hope that it would be the means of winning many converts to Christianity.

Bryant's poetry on nature, Wilcox's portrayal of American landscape, Dana's poetry of "human passion, philosophy, religion and the domestic affections," John Pierpont's odes, Brainard's "extempore effusions," Hillhouse's verses on sacred drama, and Willis' "Scripture pieces," received their share of commendation and praise. Differing with many critics, Cheever ranked Richard Dana as the foremost poet rather than William C. Bryant. His reasons were: "We admire Mr. Dana . . . because he has aimed not merely to please the imagination, but to rouse up the soul to a solemn consideration of its future destinies, . . . because his poetry is full of benevolent, affectionate, domestic feeling; but more than

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 443.

³⁹ Anon., "A Review of Cheever's *Studies in Poetry*," *North American Review*, XXXI (October, 1830), 442-460.

⁴⁰ George B. Cheever, *The American Commonplace Book of Poetry* (Boston, 1831), 5.

this because it is full of religious feelings.”⁴¹ Cheever erred when he prophesied that future generations would place Dana before Bryant.⁴² On the contrary, Richard Dana is not even accorded a place in the index to Vernon Parrington’s *The Romantic Revolution in America, 1800-1860*.

Longfellow, Whittier, Mrs. Sigourney, in fact all the leading poets were represented. Cheever did not hesitate to include the poetry of leading Unitarians if it was of an elevating nature although he invariably added a footnote expressing regret that these poets had “fallen from grace.”⁴³ That Cheever truly appreciated his classmate Longfellow was proved by his remarks on *Earth, with her thousand voices praises God*. “It displays a very refined taste and a very pure vein of poetical feeling. It possesses what has been a rare quality in the American poets—simplicity of expression, without any attempt to startle the reader, or to produce an effect by far-sought epithets. There is much sweetness in his imagery and language; and sometimes he is hardly excelled by any one for the quiet accuracy exhibited in his pictures of natural objects. His poetry will not easily be forgotten; some of it will be remembered with that of Dana and Bryant.”⁴⁴ Cheever’s choice of Longfellow’s poems was excellent, for every one that appeared in the *Commonplace Book* was later judged by Longfellow to be worthy of inclusion in his collected works.⁴⁵ The *North American Review* presented a twenty-seven page *critique* which was flattering to Cheever. The commentator lamented Cheever’s elevation of Dana to the ranking position, but generally praised the volume. He even expressed regret that Cheever had not included a larger number of original sketches.⁴⁶

During this period it is very probable that Cheever contributed several anonymous articles to the *North American Review* and the *Spirit of the Pilgrims*. Several Cheever reviews of religious books were certainly published in the *Review*. In the *Spirit of the Pilgrims* Cheever presented an estimation of Milman’s three volume

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 130-131.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 332.

⁴⁵ Austin, *Longfellow*, 80.

⁴⁶ Anon., “Cheever’s American Common-Place Book of Poetry,” *North American Review*, XXXIII (October, 1831), 297.

history of the Jews. Generally favorable to the author, Cheever offered the opinion that the book constituted a "novel, classical, spiritual, and attractive interpretation of Jewish history."⁴⁷

Another article, the *Study of Greek Literature*, appeared in serial form in the May and August, 1832, and February, 1833, numbers of the *American Quarterly Register*.⁴⁸ The primary purpose was to promote the study of Greek among the new colleges that were springing up throughout America. "It is no less than a question whether the whole mind of the country shall hereafter be hollow and empty or strong, deep, and richly fraught with wisdom. It is a question whether, in the times of trial that are coming, our spiritual leaders shall be puny, unfurnished, superficial, or men of iron mental constitutions, deep research, generous discipline, expanded views, and ability to grapple with the most learned and malignant infidels. It is a question whether the profound knowledge of the Bible and, of inevitable consequence, the union of learning and piety, shall hereafter flourish or decay."⁴⁹ Then Cheever paraded forth all the arguments that classical scholars employ today to convince high-school freshmen that they should take up the study of Latin. The only difference was that Cheever's appeal appeared on the eve of a Greek renaissance in the United States, whereas the present champions of Latin are defending a rapidly-dying cause.

The major literary contribution of 1832 was a selected edition of the *Works of Archbishop Leighton*. Cheever's goal in editing the works of the Archbishop was "to bring within the reach of private Christians the most practical and interesting portions" of Leighton's work with the hope that Christians might thereby be led to a "more thoughtful and more prayerful" existence.⁵⁰ The first sixty pages were devoted to a commentary of the life, character, and writings of the learned Scottish divine. The remainder of the lengthy volume consisted of excerpts from Leighton's collected

⁴⁷ George B. Cheever, "Milman's History of the Jews," *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, III (October, 1830), 480-492.

⁴⁸ George B. Cheever, "Study of Greek Literature," *American Quarterly Register*, IV and V (May, August, 1832, and February, 1833), 273-290; 33-46; 218-236.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁵⁰ George B. Cheever, *The Select Works of Archbishop Leighton, Prepared For the Practical Use of Christians* (Boston, 1832), preface.

works. The reviewer in the *Spirit of the Pilgrims* remarked, "The Christian public are here presented with a choice volume of practical, spiritual, devotional theology." For the worldly individual it possessed little charm but to the "sincere, devout, elevated Christian" it was a production of great merit. Concerning the introductory portion, the reviewer noted that it was in "Mr. Cheever's usual happy manner," embodying "many striking anecdotes and incidents" of Leighton's life.⁵¹

George Cheever's primary aim in writing had been that of bringing youth to a greater and deeper appreciation of life's moral values as revealed in the masterpieces of literature. To Cheever, education was valuable only if it was of a lofty and ennobling character, calculated to impress youthful minds with the glories of the Christian life.

Cheever, in his relationships with his younger brothers and sisters, undertook to put into practice some of the principles about which he had been writing. Acting as superintendent of their education, he frequently imparted to them generous quantities of the "fatherly advice" which he lamented had been so conspicuously lacking during his own school days.

In the spring of 1829 George developed a plan whereby Henry could enjoy the close supervision of his brother, and by which Elizabeth could obtain the refinements afforded by a *de luxe* private school in Boston. To insure success, George persuaded his mother to take the sickly Nat to Barrell Grove, York, Maine, where it was hoped that the sea breezes would benefit his health.

In early June all five Cheevers left Hallowell, George and Henry proceeding to Andover where Henry entered Phillips Academy, and Elizabeth continuing on to Boston where she enrolled in George Emerson's private school for young ladies.⁵² Elizabeth progressed rapidly in her studies,⁵³ as did Henry who was delighted with the privileges of Phillips Academy, supplemented as they were by George's aid and encouragement. Sometimes Henry complained that George was so deeply absorbed in study that he scarcely spoke all day; but generally speaking, this brief interlude of

⁵¹ Anon., "Review of Archbishop Leighton," *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, V (March, 1832), 183-184.

⁵² G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, June 25, 1829.

⁵³ Elizabeth to Henry and George, Boston, July 18, 1829.

cooperative education served to brighten Henry's admiration of his brother. "I have had an opportunity of knowing his true character and the 'more I have seen of him, I only love him the more.' He is indeed worthy of the highest love, and I feel proud of such a brother. . . ." ⁵⁴

Despite George's valiant pleas that Henry be permitted to remain at Andover for the winter term, Mrs. Cheever was unyielding. She insisted that Henry must come home to study with Nat at Hallowell Academy. Henry was disgruntled, but had to submit. Elizabeth was more fortunate, and was allowed to continue her Boston studies. As incentive for further advancement in music, she was presented with a purse of twenty dollars by Mr. Stickney, the choirmaster of Old South Church.⁵⁵

Although Henry and George were separated from each other, George continued to prescribe the course of outside study, which Henry should pursue in preparation for Bowdoin entrance examinations. In early January, 1830, George recommended a careful perusal of the Waverly novels, and the composition of eight or ten themes for George's correction at the next vacation. He cautioned Henry to keep religion in sight "whether you read Scott or Cooper, or Shakespeare, or history, or books of piety."⁵⁶ Throughout the year, this "running fire" of instruction was continued uninterruptedly. As the Andover commencement season approached, George Cheever made a startling confession to Henry concerning the choice of a college:

If you expect me to make a *scholar*, at Bowdoin College, it must be by your own efforts; for I cannot say much of the superior excellence of their present instructors. Your system of study I trust will be far deeper, and wider, and broader and nobler than is there pursued. You must be a thorough master of Greek—they only dip into it at college. You must learn while there the French, the German, the Italian and the Spanish. They scarcely get a smattering either. You must acquire a refined literary taste, and have a soul full of literary enthusiasm. You will find but little of it there. You must feel that your object is to gain a solid, noble, vigorous, comprehensive education. You will find the greater part of them there, without one generous impulse, idlers of their time,

⁵⁴ Henry to Elizabeth, Andover, December 3, 1829.

⁵⁵ G. B. C. to his mother, Andover, December 6, 1829.

⁵⁶ G. B. C. to Henry, Andover, January 2, 1830.

contemptible despisers of government and order, ridiculous of hard study, degraded in their taste and feelings, careless, worthless, regardless of all improvements, and anxious only to get through college. From such companions may the Lord's mercy deliver you! Yet such, it is a melancholy truth, will be a majority of students. You will find, however, a few, excellent scholars and broad-minded fellows; and before your class become initiated into the idleness, dissipation, and recklessness of feeling belonging to many of those on the other classes, they will probably most of them be for a while studious, modest, emulous of good, and interesting in deportment. It is sad to see how soon the youthful feelings, the affectionateness and simplicity of their domestic, parental circles is withered and worn away from the bosoms and manners of most young students, amidst college scenes.⁵⁷

More closely resembling the solemn pronouncements of a bitter, cynical old man, than the ordinary thought-processes of a twenty-three-year-old youth, this letter reflected the solitariness of Cheever's own college days, mingled with a desire to perpetuate the same mode of living on Henry. Already that straight-laced Puritanism, soon to be so prominently associated with George Cheever's name, had asserted itself.

In March, 1831, George requested a catalogue of the Peucini-an library that he might point out for Henry's benefit those works which were of "sterling value." He especially recommended a "very thorough knowledge of the Greek language" as the solid foundation for later "excursions into the field of English literature."⁵⁸

In May, George prescribed a very detailed course of poetry study, concluding with the admonition: "I pray that your motive may be in order to prepare yourself, by the blessing of Christ to do much for him, wherever he permits you to enter on his active service."⁵⁹ In this letter, George carefully analyzed the content and style of the leading English poets—repeating for his brother's benefit what had already appeared in *Studies in Poetry*.

The year Eighteen thirty-two was one of religious doubting for Henry; and George, remembering his own uncertainties, urged

⁵⁷ G. B. C. to Henry, Andover, August 23, 1830. Numerous letters, very similar in tone to this one, were received by Henry during his college years. The sentiments were usually reciprocal.

⁵⁸ G. B. C. to Henry, Andover, March 23, 1831.

⁵⁹ G. B. C. to Henry, Andover, May 13, 1831.

Henry to have faith and persevere. George was so anxious about his brother's religious feelings, that he expressed the wish that Henry were at Amherst. "I don't like the idea of your being at an institution which the Jackson disorganizers will soon turn into a mere administration rat-hole."⁶⁰ This plan did not materialize, because of Mrs. Cheever's opposition.

Henry graduated in 1834 as a very high-ranking student. Throughout his college career he had been carefully coached and guided by his elder brother, who in most instances, repeated for Henry's benefit the theories and opinions which had first been advanced in the *American Commonplace Book of Poetry*, *Studies in Poetry*, *The Study of Greek Literature* and other writings.

⁶⁰ G. B. C. to Henry, Boston, March 22, 1832.

CHAPTER V

TEMPERANCE AND ANTI-SLAVERY CRUSADER

The temperance crusade, inaugurated after the war of 1812 under the leadership of Lyman Beecher, Justin Edwards, and other clergymen of the evangelical sects, chiefly in New England, gathered speed in the early thirties. George Cheever had been indoctrinated with the principles of temperance by his mother, although the Cheevers, like nearly everyone else at the time, had no scruples against wine.¹ His Bowdoin and Andover experiences had confirmed these early teachings, and even before he accepted the Salem pastorate, he had formally joined the temperance ranks.

In his published articles on Indian removal, Cheever constantly referred to the temperance movement as worthy of the support of all Christian men and women who were anxious to mould America after the pattern of God's heaven.² When preaching in Hallowell in 1830, he damned drunkenness as one of the greatest evils of American society.³ Henceforth, his written and spoken discourses contained warnings that if Americans would be prepared for the approaching millennium they must repent of the sin of intoxication.

The first recorded instance of a lecture devoted solely to temperance was before the Hallowell Temperance Society in January, 1833.⁴ Prompted by Cheever's suggestion, Daniel Goodwin, the preceptor of Hallowell Academy, formed a temperance society among his students in May, 1833.⁵ At about this time Cheever's advocacy of temperance in Salem threatened to involve him in serious trouble. Apparently in the heat of the Unitarian dissension, Cheever made some disparaging remarks about a Unitarian Deacon who was engaged in the distilling of liquor at Salem. At the urgent insistence of his mother and Justin Edwards,⁶ Cheever soft-

¹ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, April 22, 1827.

² G. B. Cheever, "Removal of the Indians," 13-14.

³ Elizabeth to Henry, Hallowell, October 17, 1830.

⁴ William Stickney to G. B. C., Hallowell, March 30, 1833.

⁵ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, May 22, 1833.

⁶ Justin Edwards to G. B. C., Andover, June 3, 1833.

pedalled his convictions, so that the affair was passed over without a serious skirmish.⁷

The July issue of the *American Quarterly Observer* carried an article by Cheever entitled "The Temperance Reformation," constituting a review of the fifth annual report (1832) of the American Temperance Society. Its importance lay in its revelation of Cheever's temperance philosophy.

He regarded temperance as a cause on which God had smiled, therefore, an enterprise of "great moral sublimity."⁸ To him intemperance was the "grand cause of all the wretchedness that exists on earth." "It is the grand source of murders, robberies, rapes, riots, mutinies, profaneness, impiety, lying, stealing, Sabbath breaking and crimes of every description; of conflagrations, shipwrecks, and dread accidents by sea and land; of wasted fortunes and broken hearts; of disgrace, poverty, want, disease and death, in this world and forever. . . ." ⁹ He very picturesquely depicted the miseries resulting from habitual drunkenness, and quoted numerous statistics to prove his points. His arguments were not original, for they were the stock reasons of nearly all temperance advocates; but they were presented in a more beautiful and elegant style than many writers could command.

At this time Cheever was pessimistic concerning the accomplishments and future of the temperance reformation. "As long as there are men in every town hardened enough to sell ardent spirit, as long as legislation sanctions it, as long as the community permits dram-shops to be licensed, the temperance movement has accomplished comparatively nothing."¹⁰ He realized that temperate drinkers and dram-sellers were a powerful opposition, and that the road to victory was long and difficult. He called upon the occasional drinker, from whose ranks the drunkard was recruited, to abandon the practice both for his own good, and for the example

⁷ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, June 8, 1833: "It is a great relief to hear your *Temperance Affair* is not likely to give you further trouble. I have felt anxious respecting it and continually anxious . . . lest your zeal should carry you beyond the bonds of prudence."

⁸ George B. Cheever, "The Temperance Reformation," *American Quarterly Observer*, I (July, 1833), 59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

set for others. Cheever denounced all liquor dispensers, averring that there was no longer any excuse for the sale or use of liquor, even as a medicine.¹¹

Theron Metcalf, Dedham lawyer and member of the Massachusetts legislature, and Chauncey A. Goodrich, editor of the *Quarterly Christian Spectator*, urged Cheever to prepare additional articles on the temperance movement.¹² It appears probable that Cheever contributed a review of the seventh convention of the American Temperance Society; but authorship cannot be definitely proved, even though the general theme closely resembles that of the article in the *American Quarterly Observer*.¹³

Distilling of liquors had been one of the time-honored vocations in New England since Puritan days. Medford Rum was famous the world over. Furnishing a market for the grain of the field and the fruit of the orchard, distilling was considered to be very respectable, and many a fortune had been built up by it. With the coming of the temperance movement which emphasized drunkenness, crime, and poverty, many people questioned the morality of an alliance between liquor and Christianity. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 1830's, many pious citizens still earned their livelihoods by this method.

In Salem there was a prominent distiller of twenty years' standing, John Stone, a deacon of the First Church, Unitarian, and treasurer of the local Bible Society. To facilitate the sale of the Gospel, Stone had built a counting house in one corner of the distillery where he could occasionally be seen passing out Bibles. Unfortunately not all the members of his family trod the "straight and narrow path" as did the good Deacon. A nephew, in a drunken stupor, had once drowned in one of the vats, and one of the Deacon's own sons was a ne'er-do-well and drunkard. To advertise his product the Deacon often inserted an advertisement in the local papers—"Inquire at Deacon Stone's Distillery."¹⁴

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 75-78.

¹² Chauncey A. Goodrich to G. B. C., New Haven, June 4, 1833; Theron Metcalf to G. B. C., Dedham, July 15, 1833.

¹³ Anon., "Seventh Report of the American Temperance Society," *Quarterly Christian Spectator*, VI (December, 1834), 593-609.

¹⁴ George B. Cheever, "Deacon Giles Distillery," *Collections of Pamphlets and Periodicals in One Volume*, 18. Each article is numbered separately.

Armed with an intimate knowledge of these facts, Cheever published in the January 31, 1835, *Salem Landmark*, a temperance tract, in the form of a dream, entitled: "*Inquire at Amos Giles' Distillery.*" The operator of the imaginary distillery was a Deacon and vendor of Bibles, whose nephew had been drowned in a vat, and whose son was a drunkard. Being very greedy and avaricious, the distiller never allowed his fires to be extinguished, and operated on a seven-day week basis. There were frequent wage quarrels with the employees; and one Saturday afternoon, following an exchange of hard words, the laborers deserted. The Deacon was momentarily stunned, but the appearance of a band of "singular-looking" fellows saved the day. "Their dress was wild and uncouth, their eyes glared, and their language had a tone that was awful." The Deacon made the usual wage offer of as much rum as the workers could consume, but his new friends retorted "that they had enough of hot things where they came from without drinking damnation in the distillery." A compromise was finally reached whereby the men would receive one-half of their wages in Bibles. It was also stipulated that the laborers would work only at night.

The Deacon had recently received a fresh consignment of molasses, as well as many empty hogsheads from farmers and retailers. Locking his employees in the distillery, the Deacon left for home. Immediately, Hell broke loose. The demons, breathing flames from their nostrils, worked feverishly. All were "very boisterous and horribly profane, and seemed to engage in their work with such familiar and malignant satisfaction, that I concluded the business of distilling was as natural as hell, and must have originated there." To cure the Deacon of his hypocrisy, the cunning demons placed, on each filled hogshead, an inscription, "that should remain invisible until they were sold by the Deacon, but should flame out in characters of fire as soon as they were broached by his retailers, or exposed for the use of the drunkards." This task being accomplished, the demons disappeared as dawn broke.

When the Deacon hurried out in the morning, he found the doors still locked, although there was a three weeks' supply of liquor ready for shipment. The Deacon was so elated that he resolved to attend church services. It being communion Sabbath, he remained all day listening to a sermon in which the minister

affirmed "that God could pardon sin without an atonement, that the words hell and devils were mere figures of speech."

Sunday evening the workers reappeared, repeating the performances of the previous night. A few of the inscriptions that were placed on the casks were "Consumption Sold Here. Inquire at *Deacon Giles' Distillery*," "Convulsions and Epilepsies," "Insanity and Murder," "Dropsy and Rheumatism," "Delirium Tremens," and "Distilled Death and Liquid Damnation." When the laborers returned on Monday, they informed the Deacon that they could not work any longer; nor would their religious scruples permit them to accept any wages for work completed between Saturday evening and Monday morning. Of course, Deacon Giles was sorry to lose such excellent employees; but he was overjoyed that their efforts had cost him so little.

During the week the casks were shipped to the farms and taverns. No sooner were they set up than their hideous inscriptions blazed forth. "The drunkards were terrified from the dramshops; the bar-rooms were emptied of their customers; but in their places a gaping crowd filled every store that possessed a cask of the Deacon's devil-distilled liquor, to wonder and be affrighted at the spectacle. For no art could efface the inscriptions." When the liquor was drawn into new casks, the "same deadly letters broke into blue and red flame all over the surface." The angry grocers and tavern-keepers returned the casks to Salem, dumping them at the Deacon's distillery where "Consumption, Damnation, Death, and Hell mingled together in frightful confusion; and in equal prominence in every case flamed out the direction, *Inquire at Deacon Giles' Distillery*."

For a brief time liquor consumption dwindled. The undismayed Deacon dumped out the polluted liquor, burned his barrels, and manufactured a new supply. His advertisement continued to appear in the papers. Whenever the "dreamer" saw them, he always read "Hell, Death, and the Deacon," rather than *Inquire at Deacon Giles' Distillery*.¹⁵

This temperance tract burst like a bombshell in the midst of Salem Society. Everyone identified Deacon Giles as Deacon John Stone. The Unitarians were wild, and the Unitarian press denounced Cheever in the most uncomplimentary terms. The *Land-*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-16.

mark, considered Cheever's organ, disavowed any previous knowledge of the "dream," and issued a public reprimand to its author.¹⁶ Deacon Stone was so incensed that he, at once, instituted a libel suit.

On Saturday afternoon, February 7, as the Reverend Cheever strolled alone along Essex Street, he was suddenly accosted by the burly foreman of Deacon Stone's Distillery. Mr. Ham, aided by several accomplices, administered a public horsewhipping to the minister. Fortunately, Cheever was not severely injured; and in the presence of the crowd that quickly gathered, he forgave his assailant, and beseeched God also to forgive him.¹⁷ The attack, even if justified, was a mistake. It served only to arouse sympathy for Cheever from many who had deprecated the "dream." Cheever's own flock rose to a valiant defense of its pastor, and his sermons of the morrow were attended by uncommonly large and solemn congregations. In fact, it was the beginning of another revival within the society.¹⁸

The story of *Deacon Giles' Distillery* was quickly repeated all over the country. The Unitarians and anti-temperance forces were hostile, whereas temperance standard-bearers rallied to Cheever's side. The *Liberator*, *Boston Recorder*, *New York Evangelist*, *New York Observer*, *Lynn Record*, *Zion's Herald* and others lauded Cheever's attack on liquor. Letters from sympathizing friends poured into Cheever's study. E. C. Delavan, former wine-merchant, but in 1835 the leading temperance worker in New York State, reprinted *Deacon Giles' Distillery* in the March number of his *Temperance Recorder*,¹⁹ and distributed thousands of copies gratuitously. The *Liberator* and other sympathetic journals also reprinted the "dream." Some editors compared Cheever to Stephen the Martyr, others to Martin Luther, and still others to John the Divine.²⁰ George Cheever overnight had emerged as a nationally-

¹⁶ Henry to his mother, Andover, February 14, 1835.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Henry, a student at Andover Theological Seminary, by accident, went to Salem to visit George, arriving there at the height of the excitement; *Liberator*, February 14, 1835, 27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ H. C. Wright to G. B. C., Boston, February 26, 1835.

²⁰ Jonathan Barrell to Mrs. Cheever, York, Maine (no date).

known figure. There was a slight disagreement as to whether he was a saint or a scoundrel.²¹

In addition to the libel suit against Cheever, the opposition brought suit against Dudley Phelps and Ferdinand Andrews for printing and publishing the alleged libel.²² Counter-suits were instituted against Ham, Jenks, and Putnam for assault on the person of Cheever. All these cases came before the Court of Common Pleas at Ipswich, with Judge Strong presiding. Indictments were unanimously found against all defendants. Attorney-General Austin, a prominent Unitarian, represented Deacon Stone; and Rufus Choate and Caleb Cushing defended Cheever. Austin was very anxious that Cheever should be tried immediately, but the defending lawyers persuaded Judge Strong that the case should be continued till the June term of court.²³

The interim was spent very profitably by the defendant. Almost every evening, George Cheever was called to some near-by town to deliver a temperance lecture in which "distillers, dram-sellers, select-men, temperate drinkers, and drunkards were exposed and treated as they deserve."²⁴

When Cheever's case was tried in June, the plaintiff was again represented by Attorney-General Austin, aided by Leverett Saltonstall. Peleg Sprague replaced Cushing as Choate's colleague for the defense.²⁵ Very little new evidence was introduced. Despite the testimony of Leonard Woods and Moses Stuart of Andover, the Reverend Blagden, Bela B. Edwards, John Tappan, and the Reverend Cowles, Deacon Stone was so adept at identifying himself as "Deacon Amos Giles" that the jury, after five hours' deliberation, directed a verdict in the plaintiff's favor. The defense attorneys immediately appealed to the Massachusetts Supreme Court.

²¹ The ladies of the Howard Street Church raised funds to make Cheever a member of the New England Anti-Slavery Society. The men raised \$30 to secure him a life membership in the American Temperance Society. Henry to his mother, Andover, February 14, 1835.

²² *Liberator*, April 4, 1835, 56. Garrison copied this material from the *Salem Gazette* of February 23, 1835.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Henry to his mother, Boston, March 3, 1835.

²⁵ John Tappan to G. B. C., Boston, May 3, 1835. The defense forces had previously consulted Daniel Webster, Octavius Frelinghuysen, William Wirt, and Samuel Hubbard, as to the best methods of procedure.

The case against the *Landmark* was *nolle prosequi*. The charges against Ham's colleagues were dropped; but Ham entered a plea of guilty and was fined \$141.62.²⁶

The board of strategy for the defense disagreed concerning the best course of action before the Supreme Court of Massachusetts. Some advised a settlement outside of court, but the majority favored a great public display in order that glory might be reflected upon the temperance movement. John Tappan wrote: "When it comes before the Supreme Court I would employ the best counsel that the State afforded, and I wish you not to have any regard to the expense, for the friends of temperance will take care of that, and will furnish you with Swords of Damascus Steel, if you will wield them in cutting off the head of the Dragon."²⁷ Edmund Munroe of Boston actually advanced one hundred dollars to retain Daniel Webster;²⁸ but pressure of business at the capitol, and the opposition of Joshua Leavitt, editor of the *New York Evangelist*, and E. C. Delavan, foiled this plan.²⁹ These latter gentlemen undoubtedly felt that "convivial" Webster was not the proper person to handle a public defense of temperance. They recommended that Choate be employed to open the case, after which Cheever would take the stand to preach a temperance sermon "to the consciences of the multitude such as they have never heard before." They promised that if Cheever was successful, Justin Edwards and John Tappan would direct the campaign for funds. "If you fail and especially if you are imprisoned, the money will come from the hearts of the Church. The readers of the *Evangelist* will raise it, by half dollars. . . ." ³⁰ If the necessary funds could not be raised in this manner, then Cheever could write "*Dreams in Prison* prefaced by *Deacon Giles' Distillery*." ³¹

On December 4, 1835, Cheever's case was reviewed in Boston by the Massachusetts Supreme Court with Chief Justice Shaw presiding. The defending attorney announced that the minister was withdrawing his plea of not guilty, and asked that leniency be

²⁶ *Liberator*, July 11, 1835, 112.

²⁷ John Tappan to G. B. C., Boston, May 3, 1835.

²⁸ Edmund Munroe to G. B. C., Boston, November 12, 1835.

²⁹ Joshua Leavitt to G. B. C., New York, November 12, 1835.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

granted. Cheever then stepped forward and read an hour-long, carefully-prepared assault on drunkenness and its evils. The prosecuting attorney asked that Cheever be made to suffer the full penalty of the law; and the Court directed a jail sentence of thirty days, a \$1000 fine,³² and the posting of bonds to keep the peace for two years.³³

In his defense, Cheever insisted that he had not intended to slander any particular person. In view of the circumstances, this was a considerable understatement. In his *Indian Removal* article, Cheever had unmercifully lambasted Lewis Cass; and in his earlier writings on temperance, he had referred to liquor-distilling Deacons in derogatory terms.³⁴ Cheever had not counted on a libel suit. He had expected that the Unitarians and liquor-distillers would grumble, but he had not envisioned a tangle with the law. Even though Cheever lost, he actually won; and Deacon Stone was the ultimate loser. Stone was discredited in the eyes of a vast multitude. In the whirl of the onrushing temperance movement, Stone's distilling business declined. Cheever gained full revenge when the Washingtonian Temperance Society of Salem was organized in the building formerly used as the Deacon's distillery.³⁵ Temperance historians almost unanimously refer to Cheever's "dream" as the most effective anti-liquor document that had appeared up to 1835; and they also praise it for its acceleration of the tempo of the temperance crusade.³⁶

Perhaps Cheever's appeal to the Supreme Court was only for effect, but the sentence imposed was a great shock to the minister. To one, he wrote: "What will you think when I tell you that the Unitarian Court have sentenced me to an imprisonment of 30

³² H. T. Cheever, *Memorial Address*, 5.

³³ G. B. Cheever, *Deacon Giles' Distillery*, 20.

³⁴ In his famous 4th of July address, 1833, Cheever had remarked: "The wholesale manufacturers and dealers in this poison, are the poisoners-general of the community; and neither expediency, nor any other considerations of the kind, should keep us, as men, as citizens, or as ministers of the gospel from uttering the whole truth in regard to this iniquity. . . ."

³⁵ John A. Krout, *Origins of Prohibition* (New York, 1925), 260.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 259; J. G. Woolley and W. E. Johnson, *Temperance Progress of the Century* (Philadelphia, 1903), 83; E. H. Cherrington, ed., *Standard Encyclopedia of the Alcohol Problem* (Westerville, Ohio), II, 564; George F. Clark, *History of the Temperance Reform in Massachusetts 1813-1883* (Boston, 1888), 34.

days.”³⁷ Again, “Who would have imagined that the next letter I should send . . . would be written in the county jail.” Although Cheever’s incarceration was not welcomed by him, neither was it accompanied by the unpleasanties so often associated with a dirty, musty, old jail.

Here I am, most comfortably situated in a study, which my friends have fitted up in a style for a prince. I have the liberty of the spacious halls, and the journeyings up and down stairs for exercise, and my sawhorse with a great pile of wood outside my door, which I demolish and conflagrate at the expense of the county. I entertain company from morning to the evening, from different quarters of the country round about. I have a man Thomas to wait upon me at all hours. . . .³⁸

The ladies of his church carpeted his cell.³⁹ Friends showered him with good things of all kinds to eat, “sundry loaves of bread, and great bowls of baked apples, and huge piles of cakes and tarts and thanksgiving pies and Christmas puddings, and oceans of preserved peaches and pears. . . .” Unable to consume these vast quantities of food, he became “alms-giver-general of the prison,” and distributed them to all the inmates.⁴⁰

When the month of imprisonment was over, Cheever was released at one o’clock in the morning for fear of rioting if he was freed by daylight. As the day of his release was the Sabbath, Cheever ascended the pulpit, and preached to “such a crowded house as I think I never before beheld, convened not only from Salem but from round about.”⁴¹ Many were curious, others were genuinely sympathetic. If they expected a philippic, they were disappointed for they received a simple New Year’s sermon; but it was powerful enough to launch another revival within the society.⁴²

In April, 1836, Cheever again attracted attention when he journeyed to Concord, New Hampshire, to deliver an address be-

³⁷ G. B. C. to Henry, Salem, December, 1835. Written while in prison.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Clark, *Temperance Reform in Massachusetts*, 34.

⁴⁰ G. B. C. to Henry, Salem, January 7, 1836.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* The crowd was estimated at fifteen hundred.

⁴² New York *Evangelist*, January 16, 1836, 1. Copied from Cheever’s letter to Joshua Leavitt.

fore a total abstinence society. An attempt was made to break up the meeting by ringing the church bell as if for a fire. In the late evening a gang of fifteen, inebriated rough-necks paraded through Concord streets in sleighs. Reaching the home of Mr. Boulton, where Cheever was lodging, they demanded that the "dreamer" come forth. After rousing the neighborhood from sleep, the celebrators repaired to the State House where George Cheever was burned in effigy.⁴³ Such a performance discredited its perpetrators, and increased Cheever's popularity as well as that of the cause he represented.

Although Cheever did not take a leading part in the temperance crusade of the next two decades, he never entirely lost his zeal for the movement. When it was demonstrated that moral suasion alone was not enough to eradicate drunkenness, Cheever turned to prohibition. Cheever attended a temperance convention at Saratoga Springs soon after the passage of Neal Dow's Maine Law in 1851. After listening to the varied debate concerning the merits of prohibition, Cheever solemnly announced:

This northernmost State of our Union has come nearer to the ideal of a public righteousness and a disinterested regard for the welfare of its citizens, in the enactment of the recent statute against the making and selling of ardent spirit, than any State or nation ever yet named in the annals of history. . . . This noble legislation against Rum, this perfect protection of the poor and needy from the Distillery . . . vindicates the State motto *Dirigo*. . . .⁴⁴

He exhorted Maine citizens to execute the law faithfully, and called upon other State legislatures to pass similar enactments.

Cheever realized that the liquor interests were a vigorous faction, wealthy and unscrupulous. He implored the religious public to be on its guard lest the brewers and retailers should overwhelm it. He frequently upbraided editors who dared not print Neal Dow's correspondence, because their papers derived extensive income from liquor advertisements. He endorsed the practice of confiscating liquor. "The 'wanton waste' . . . of every barrel of strong drink, is the prevention of so much disease, poverty, and crime; the 'wanton waste,' the utter destruction, of the article is

⁴³ *Evangelist*, April 23, 1836, 67.

⁴⁴ *New York Independent*, September 4, 1851.

the highest economy.”⁴⁵ On several occasions, Cheever heard addresses by John B. Gough, the noted temperance orator. Cheever always came away convinced that Gough was a perfect example of the redemptive power of Christianity supported by total abstinence and prohibition.

“*Deacon Giles’ Distillery*” was the zenith of Cheever’s career as a temperance advocate. Although he always championed temperance, the “Protestant Crusade” and the slavery controversy were his main interests of the years, 1835-1865.

During the years of his Salem pastorate, Cheever was actively associated with another struggling reform movement—anti-slavery. His earliest efforts were independent of any organized group, and probably originated from his broad humanitarianism, and from a conviction that the Bible condemned slavery. In October, 1830, just after his graduation from Andover, he preached a sermon at Hallowell in which he denounced slavery as a national sin.⁴⁶

His first contacts with a national organization were with the American Colonization Society.⁴⁷ In 1831 William Lloyd Garrison kindled the flame of violent agitation with the *Liberator*. Cheever was friendly to Garrison’s cause, and included Garrison’s sonnet on the *Free Mind* in the *American Common-Place Book of Poetry*. To the sonnet, Cheever added a footnote:

With all the heart, we bid its author God speed in his efforts in the cause of freedom. But it needs *patience* and *prudence*, as well as stern moral courage. The possible results of the Colonization Society, and the success which may attend the efforts for the entire abolition of slavery in this country, constitute *the great problem*, on the solution of which our prosperity, and perhaps our existence as a nation depends. Every man who can speak, every editor who can influence the public mind, should certainly be doing all in his power to hasten the period of complete emancipation. Speed it, O Father! Let thy kingdom come! . . .⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, March 25, 1852.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth to Henry, Hallowell, October 17, 1830.

⁴⁷ In 1830 the Cheever brothers, Nat and Henry, were busily engaged in collecting funds for the Colonization Society. They would not have done so without George’s approval or prompting. Nat to G. B. C., Hallowell, February 1, 1830.

⁴⁸ G. B. Cheever, *Common-Place Book of Poetry*, 57.

At this point Cheever was wavering between the views of the colonizationists and the abolitionists.

In the summer of 1833, Ralph R. Gurley, editor of the *African Repository* and life director of the Colonization Society, approached Cheever as the Salem divine most likely to promote a meeting in the interests of the Society. Gurley was in Boston at the time, and was anxious to bring two negroes, one the Lieutenant-Governor of Liberia and the other, the High Sheriff of the colony, to Salem in an effort to raise funds for the Society's diminished treasury.⁴⁹

In February, 1834, the Anti-Slavery Society of Salem and vicinity was formed with eighty charter members. George B. Cheever was elected to the position of Corresponding Secretary.⁵⁰ The preamble of the society's constitution stated: "Our object is the extinction of slavery in the nation of which we are citizens." At a subsequent meeting, it was voted "that by the words immediate, simultaneous, emancipation as used in our Constitution we mean that all citizens of the slave-holding States ought *immediately* to make *preparation* for the liberation of all their slaves; and, as early as such preparations *can* be made, to give freedom to all. . . ." ⁵¹

From time to time, public notices of anti-slavery meetings in Salem's Howard Street Church appeared in the *Essex Register*. On one occasion "interesting information on the subject of the anti-slavery cause will be considered, and resolutions discussed." ⁵² Again, the Reverend Samuel J. May, one of the original founders of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, was advertised as the featured speaker.⁵³ A meeting was announced for July 4, 1834, at the Howard Street Church at which the Reverend James S. Woodbury, an agent of the Anti-Slavery Society, would speak.⁵⁴ A collection was to be taken toward the \$20,000 fund which the American Anti-Slavery Society had resolved to raise for the cur-

⁴⁹ R. R. Gurley to G. B. C., Boston, July 11, 1833.

⁵⁰ *Essex Register*, Salem, February 13, 1834. Copied from the *Salem Gazette* of February 11, 1834.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Essex Register*, April 28, 1834.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, May 26, 1834.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, July 3, 1834, 3.

rent year.⁵⁵ As a ranking official of the local society, and as pastor of the host Church, Cheever took a prominent part in the anti-slavery activities of Salem.

During the summer months of 1834 Cheever was forced to recuperate among the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the mineral springs of New York State. When at Saratoga Springs, George and Nat, who had accompanied George on these wanderings, made their headquarters at the Washington Hall, a temperance hotel, much frequented by ministers and pious people. On several occasions George Cheever participated in lengthy debates with a Mr. Rogers, a Virginia Army officer, on the abolition question. On the last evening Cheever had the floor. Nat's record read:

I think and believe you would also have *thought so*, that he proved conclusively from consecutive passages of Scripture, that the origin of slavery was in sin, that its being allowed by God under peculiar restrictions, and as a punishment to the Israelites, is no justification of slavery in any other country, and that the tenor and spirit of the Bible is in direct opposition to it. . . .⁵⁶

In mid-September, George Thompson, the British apostle of emancipation, arrived in America with sufficient funds for a three-year tour in behalf of the American Anti-Slavery Society.⁵⁷ During the summer there had been general rioting against abolitionists, both north and south. Anti-slavery meetings were broken up, houses ransacked, free colored people assaulted on the street, and other outrages committed.⁵⁸ When Thompson reached New York City, he was turned out of the Atlantic Hotel at the request of an indignant Southern patron. Turning to New England, he was cordially greeted by S. J. May and W. L. Garrison, under whose auspices he had been induced to visit the United States. A New England tour was arranged, and some thirty lectures were delivered before the end of the year.⁵⁹ Public reaction was divided. Some

⁵⁵ \$5,000 of the \$20,000 was to be turned over to the American Bible Society for the purchase of Bibles for the negroes. *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Nat to Henry, Saratoga Springs, August 11, 1834.

⁵⁷ Gilbert H. Barnes, *The Anti-Slavery Impulse 1830-1844* (New York, 1933), 63.

⁵⁸ W. P. Garrison and F. T. Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison* (New York), I, 447.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 451-452.

communities welcomed him; others, including Augusta, Concord, and Lowell, drove him out. One of the pulpits to which he was welcomed was that of the Howard Street Church in Salem. The *Salem Gazette* was outraged by the presence of such an agitator in a peaceful community.⁶⁰ Cheever, on the other hand, lauded Thompson's views of slavery. Under the pseudonym of *Onesimus*⁶¹ he wrote a letter to the *Landmark*:

Mr. Editor, I enjoyed the privilege, during the last Sabbath, of hearing Rev. George Thompson. . . . He is an eloquent speaker, and a man evidently of warm and humble piety. Those who listened to him could not but be delighted with the affectionate and earnest Christian spirit, in which he treated the subject of slavery. He went into a frightful examination of the Scriptures and of the genius of Christianity, in regard to this sin; and the result was proof conclusive that every part of the Bible, both in letter and in spirit, utterly condemns it. The advocates of slavery are wont to resort to the Levitical Law for argument in its favor. Mr. Thompson demonstrated the application of the Law to the system of American Slavery would shatter it to fragments, as if a thunder-bolt from heaven had fallen on it, bringing every part of this large edifice of cruelty, roof, battlements, foundation and cap-stone to the ground. . . .⁶²

Cheever further exhorted Salem citizens to circulate petitions for the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia.⁶³ This visit of Thompson's had a profound effect on Cheever's anti-slavery thinking.⁶⁴ It deepened his convictions that slavery was a sin, and moulded a pattern which Cheever would employ years later when anti-slavery preaching was his chief occupation.

In January, 1835, Cheever journeyed to Boston to answer the call of the orthodox clergy, led by Joseph Tracy and Leonard Bacon, for a convention to form an *American Union for the Re-*

⁶⁰ *Liberator*, December 24, 1834; the *Essex Register*, November 2, 1835, contains an account of public meeting in Salem to help drive out the *Foreign Pest* who is endeavoring to agitate the country with his doctrines, and to destroy the Union of the States by his fanaticism.

⁶¹ Elizabeth to Henry, Hallowell, February 3, 1835.

⁶² *Liberator*, January 3, 1835, 1.

⁶³ Elizabeth to Henry, Hallowell, February 3, 1835.

⁶⁴ Garrison and Garrison, *W. L. Garrison*, I, 454, mentioning the great incidents of abolition for 1834, refer to Cheever's appearance as an anti-slaveryite.

lief and Improvement of the Colored Race.⁶⁵ The convention developed into a pitched battle between the Garrisonians and those who looked upon the former as irreligious fanatics beyond the pale of the church. The Garrisonians were expelled from the convention, which refused to denounce slavery as a sin, and substituted the words "with the least possible delay" for "universally and immediately" in reference to the "abandonment" of slavery rather than its "abolition."⁶⁶

Cheever was in a dilemma which became increasingly embarrassing in the latter months of 1835. "*Deacon Giles' Distillery*" had appeared the last of January, 1835. W. L. Garrison sprang to Cheever's defense, and throughout the successive trials, gave full and favorable publicity to Cheever's cause. John and Arthur Tappan, who fell under the spell of the *American Union*, promised pecuniary aid to Cheever in his campaign against liquor; and the minister was fearful lest he should lose their powerful support.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, in September he delivered an abolition address at Andover.⁶⁸ George Thompson had labored there in January and July, hoping to establish an anti-slavery society; but his efforts had been foiled by the pro-slavery faculty friends, especially Moses Stuart, of the *American Union*.⁶⁹ Cheever's endeavor was equally unsuccessful, and he was severely censured by former friends.⁷⁰ In November, just prior to the sitting of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, Cheever complained that his Boston allies were deserting, because of his notoriety as an abolitionist. Consequently, Cheever appealed to Joshua Leavitt and other New York temperance leaders for the sum of \$1000.⁷¹

George Thompson's lectures in 1835 aroused fierce opposition, especially in the larger centers. In many instances he was compelled to beat a hasty retreat to escape mobbing. Finally, after having been denounced by Andrew Jackson in a presidential mes-

⁶⁵ Henry to Nat, Andover, January 14, 1835.

⁶⁶ Garrison and Garrison, *W. L. Garrison*, I, 469-470.

⁶⁷ Joshua Leavitt to G. B. C., New York, November 24, 1835.

⁶⁸ Andover Seminary was nearly 90% in favor of the Colonization Society, *Boston Recorder*, March 27, 1833.

⁶⁹ Garrison and Garrison, *W. L. Garrison*, II, 2-3.

⁷⁰ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., York, Maine, September 18, 1835.

⁷¹ Joshua Leavitt to G. B. C., New York, November 24, 1835.

sage, he was smuggled out of the country.⁷² Thompson's treatment was not unique. Abolitionists, generally, were maltreated; some even lost their lives at the hands of pro-slavery rioters. Upon Cheever's release from prison in January, 1836, he expostulated:

It does seem as if the Southerners were perfectly mad, and the people of the North have betrayed their own best interests, as well as the great cause of righteousness, in so disgracefully truckling to the slave-holding pride and fury of the South. Dr. Channing has come out on the subject of Slavery; well in the main, though unjust toward abolitionists. Some of his chapters are eloquent, admirable. The blessed cause is evidently progressing, though its defenders will still have to advance through fire and water...⁷³

Cheever at least sympathized with the persecuted abolitionists.

When Theodore Weld was invited to become the principal speaker at the annual convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York, May, 1836, he declined, asserting that some new convert, preferably George Cheever or Gerrit Smith, should be introduced.⁷⁴ Jeremiah Wilbur, the chairman of the arrangements committee, made overtures to both Smith and Cheever; but neither was yet ready to identify himself so prominently with the Garrisonians.⁷⁵

Cheever must have been unsympathetic to the principles of the "Norfolk Resolutions" which were adopted by the General Association of Connecticut Congregational Churches in March, 1837.⁷⁶ At one stroke revivalists and abolitionists were excluded from Congregational pulpits in Connecticut. No longer would the Congregational Church serve as "the community forum where an agitator, were he crank or prophet, could speak his heart."⁷⁷ The Massachusetts General Association followed the example of the Connecticut churches, and by means of a "Pastoral Letter" closed its pulpits to abolitionists.⁷⁸ George Cheever was in Europe at the

⁷² W. A. S. Hewins, "George Thompson," *Dictionary of National Biography*, LII (New York, 1898), 211.

⁷³ G. B. C. to Nat and Henry, Salem, January 7, 1836.

⁷⁴ Gilbert Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844* (New York, 1934), I, 287-288.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 293-294.

⁷⁶ *Religious Intelligencer*, March 18, 1837.

⁷⁷ Barnes, *Anti-Slavery Impulse*, 245.

⁷⁸ Garrison and Garrison, *W. L. Garrison*, II, 133.

time. Had he been in America, he, undoubtedly, would have raised his voice in protest, for he was always an enthusiastic supporter of the freedom of the pulpit to condemn evil whenever and wherever it was found. His pulpit in Howard Street had ever been open to those who were the pioneering spirits of the temperance and anti-slavery movements.

Meantime, George Cheever, for three years busily engaged in Unitarian, temperance, and abolition agitation, had decided to relinquish his Salem pastorate. Now that he was famous, new fields of endeavor opened before him. Within a short time after his release from prison, three excellent situations were offered to him. The first was as Professor of Sacred Rhetoric at Oberlin College⁷⁹ to which the Lane Rebels, led by Theodore Weld, had seceded in 1835. (Frankly espousing abolitionism, and non-discrimination against negro students, Oberlin College had invited Charles G. Finney, the noted evangelist, to become its president. At the insistence of Lewis Tappan, the philanthropist and reformer, Finney had accepted. It was probably through the influence of these two men, both Cheever's personal friends, that the Salem pastor was offered the professorship.) Many ministerial associates including the Reverend John Cleaveland,⁸⁰ pastor of a large Presbyterian Church in Detroit and former pastor of the Tabernacle Congregational Church of Salem, strongly advised Cheever to accept. Almost simultaneously he received an invitation from Roger M. Sherman of Fairfield, Connecticut, to assume pastoral charge of the First Congregational Church of Bridgeport.⁸¹ He also received a call to a large Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York.⁸² All of these positions represented a great advancement over the Howard Street Church, but Cheever was not yet ready to settle down again. He had resolved to take an extended European vacation before plunging deeper into controversy. Thus it was that he

⁷⁹ Elizabeth to G. B. C., December 7, 1835; Henry to Mrs. Cheever, Marseilles, January 19, 1836.

⁸⁰ John P. Cleaveland to G. B. C., Detroit, December 30, 1835.

⁸¹ Roger M. Sherman to G. B. C., Fairfield, Connecticut, February 2, 1836.

⁸² G. B. C. to Henry, Boston, April 24, 1836; Nat to his mother, May 27, 1836.

accompanied his brother, Nat, on the latter's second voyage to Malaga.⁸³

⁸³ Nat had been afforded only temporary relief from asthma by the summer's [1835] wanderings with George among the mountains and mineral springs. An entire change of scenery had been deemed necessary, and in July, 1835, he and Henry set out for Malaga, Spain, where their uncle, George G. Barrell, who was stationed as American consul, entertained them in royal style.

Although they greatly admired Barrell's intellectual achievements, they were deeply grieved when they beheld his moral attainment. Prompted by George Cheever, they spent many hours trying to improve Barrell's religious health, and to convert the native Catholics to Protestantism. The uncle, who scoffed at religion and evangelism, finally forbade the "missionaries" to discuss the subject in public or in his presence. Nat to his mother, New York, July 1, 1835; George G. Barrell to Mrs. Cheever, Malaga, January 7, 1836.

In early February, 1837, the brothers sailed from Malaga to New Orleans where Nat hoped to find passage for the South Seas. As no ships were immediately available, Nat returned to the north, where his health again collapsed, forcing him to sea once more. Henry, anxious to repay George the \$832 advanced by him for college expenses and sea voyage, remained in the South. The Reverend Joel Parker, then stationed in New Orleans, obtained for Henry a lucrative position as tutor in the family of Robert McNair, wealthy resident of New Orleans. While sojourning in the Southland, Henry's abolitionism disappeared; and he plied George with admonitions to tread lightly lest he damage the reputation which *Deacon Giles' Distillery* had earned for him in the South. Henry and Nat to G. B. C., Marseilles, February 2, 1836; Henry to Nat, New Orleans, April 28, 1836; Henry to G. B. C., May 9, 1836; Henry to Elizabeth, New River, Louisiana, May 22, 1836.

CHAPTER VI

OBSERVER OF OLD WORLD RELIGIONS

When it was ascertained in Salem that Cheever contemplated a European vacation, the Howard Street Church declined to grant its pastor a complete dismissal. Therefore, he was only partially released, with the stipulation that he would reconsider the issue upon his return from Europe.¹

The financial distresses resulting from the continued over-expansion of credit, wild speculation in public lands and internal improvements, and the sudden halt induced by the Specie Circular, were already being felt in the fall of 1836. The government surplus had vanished, and the country was rapidly plunging into the panic of 1837. For the first time, Cheever realized the full meaning of "hard times." A meagre salary at Salem, repayment of college expenses to his mother, expensive litigation over "Deacon Giles," and financial aid to his invalid brothers had drained away his own resources. Consequently he was forced to borrow, which was a very difficult task in the fall of 1836. After vain appeals to Gerrit Smith,² the Peterboro philanthropist, and to other friends in New York City, Cheever was finally authorized by Joshua Leavitt to draw upon the New York *Evangelist* for \$1000,³ for which the *Evangelist* received exclusive rights to the letters which Cheever expected to write.⁴

Setting sail late in November, George Cheever experienced an especially uncomfortable initiation as a sailor. For many days he was confined to his cabin with seasickness.⁵ When he was able to come on deck again, his trip developed into a "bus-man's holiday." Acting as ship's chaplain he conducted many prayer services among the sailors. He also faithfully distributed the religious tracts which had been donated by the Seamen's Friend Society of New York.⁶

¹ George B. Cheever to Henry, Hallowell, November 4, 1836.

² G. B. C. to his mother, New York, November 11, 1836.

³ Nat Cheever to Elizabeth, New York, November 15, 1836.

⁴ The New York *Evangelist* failed financially during the 1837 depression and Joshua Leavitt induced Sidney Morse of the New York *Observer* to pay the *Evangelist* \$1,000 entitling the *Observer* to sole publication of Cheever's letters. Sidney E. Morse to G. B. C., New York, April 8, 1837.

⁵ Nat to Elizabeth, at sea, December 2, 1836.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Cheever's first reactions to Malaga and "Uncle George" were pleasant ones. "Their [Nat and Henry] descriptions of our apartments, and of Uncle's house, and mode of life was very just and accurate. The house is truly a delightful one, and most beautifully furnished with all things in great neatness, and from room to room, a perfect gallery of paintings."⁷ Although George grew very fond of his uncle, he was deeply grieved that his uncle's heart was so cold to the all-important subject of religion.

That George was unable to persuade his uncle that he would burn for his sins was very amusing to Henry Cheever. "From the tenor of George's half of the sheet, I shrewdly suspect he finds it harder" to "accomplish great things, than he did affectionately exhort me so to do when a year and a half ago I was in the same situation and exposed to like trials and temptations."⁸

In the brief space of three months spent at Malaga, George Cheever displayed much interest in the politics and religion of Spain. Cheever felt that the political struggle between the Queen's forces and the Carlists was a conflict between liberalism and reaction. A lover of liberty, he backed the "Christines" for he considered civil liberties to be safer in their hands than those of the Carlists.⁹ An even greater safeguard would be for the Protestant Reformation to sweep away the prejudices and backwardness of the powerful Spanish hierarchy.¹⁰

After observing the many Catholic holidays and feastdays and the "continental Sabbath" at its worst, Cheever remarked:¹¹ "I am inclined to think that this is *the great reason* for the intellectual superiority of Protestant over Catholic countries. In Protestant countries the Sabbath is a day of sacred *rest*, but not of indolence; it is a day of intellectual excitement as well as of spiritual effort."

Hoping to contribute to Spanish enlightenment, Cheever distributed a large number of Spanish tracts and Bibles, published by the American Tract Society and the American Bible Society, to the natives and even to the Catholic priests, whom Cheever referred to as "characters of sensuality and debauchery."¹² The only praise-

⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Malaga, December 22, 1836.

⁸ Henry Cheever to his mother, New Orleans, March 23, 1837.

⁹ New York *Evangelist*, June 24, 1837.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ New York *Observer*, September 25, 1841, 153.

¹² *Evangelist*, June 24, 1837.

worthy feature of Spanish Catholicism, in Cheever's eyes, was the great *House of Mercy* at Cadiz. This was a benevolent institution "on a scale so grand, and apparently so well administered, that it deserves a record among the noblest institutions of charity to be seen in any country."¹³

In April, Cheever left Spain to proceed leisurely to England where he expected to attend the annual conventions of British religious societies in May. While in Lisbon, Portugal, he made an interesting comparison between its dirtiness and that of New York City, asserting that the American city "will forever remain unrivalled in the world for its grossness, so long as that monstrous nuisance of hogs in the street . . . with swill turned into the gutters even from doors polite to feed them is permitted to pollute the atmosphere and insult the gaze of the stranger. . . ."¹⁴

The first anniversary celebration which Cheever attended in London was that of the Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews.¹⁵ Others were those of the London Tract Society, British and Foreign School Society, British and Foreign Temperance Society, and the London Missionary Society.¹⁶ Some of his deepest impressions of British religious society, gleaned from these meetings, were the great regard for church liturgy,¹⁷ and the worship of wealth and title as the reigning religion of London. "John Bull is full of pride and vanity, and is always unhappy, in the midst of ten thousand comforts, for want of something he has not got."¹⁸ "The extraordinary manner in which the audience and the speakers on the platform appeared to receive as great boons and concessions from the bishops and higher clergy, the simplest acts of Christian duty" and the "quick communion between the speaker and the audience, and a disposition on their part to be satisfied with a very indifferent speech, provided it were delivered in a graceful manner, or possessed some one or two points which they could lay hold of to applaud" seemed of especial significance to him.¹⁹

He surmised that the British religious public exerted more in-

¹³ *Observer*, September 4, 1841, 140.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, November 13, 1841, 181.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 22, 1837, 116.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, August 5, 1837, 124.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, July 22, 1837, 116.

¹⁸ G. B. C. to G. G. Barrell, Havre, October 28, 1837.

¹⁹ *Observer*, July 22, 1837, 116.

fluence on Parliament than the similar American class exerted on Congress.²⁰ He marvelled at the ability of dissenters and Established Church leaders to get along at public meetings of a religious nature, and then within a few days they would be at each other's throat.²¹ He was dismayed by the obvious split between the total abstinence forces and those who favored the use of light wines and beer. He also noted that total abstinence had very few adherents among either the Established or dissenting clergy.²²

English and Scottish social and political questions were extremely interesting to Cheever. Eighteen hundred and thirty-seven was a memorable year for it marked the accession of Victoria to the throne of the British Empire. Cheever was in Scotland at the time; and although he considered the Scottish celebrations in her honor as "colorless," he felt that her reign opened auspiciously and augured well for the future.²³ Cheever, never a strong advocate of women's rights, remarked: "But what an absurd system is that, which places a child, a girl, at the head of the government of the first nation of the world." ²⁴

On July 17, 1837, Parliament was prorogued and a new election ordered.²⁵ The Whigs rested upon their laurels as reformers, while the Tories attacked them as radicals who sought to overthrow the existing social order.²⁶ Cheever's sympathies were with the Whigs. He regarded the Tories as very "unscrupulous in their vote-getting methods," and he had much to say against the omnipresence of bribery, riots, outrages, rotten boroughs, and "fictitious votes." ²⁷ While he was sojourning in Edinburgh, the radicals paraded and "demonstrated" to the great annoyance of Cheever who branded them a "menace to society" unless "educated" and unless their interests in society were "safeguarded and protected." ²⁸

²⁰ *Ibid.*, August 12, 1837, 128.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, December 23, 1837, 204.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Sidney Low and Lloyd C. Sanders, *The History of England During the Reign of Victoria* (London, 1910), 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²⁷ *Observer*, October 21, 1837, 168.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, October 28, 1837, 172.

Cheever rejoiced in the great American middle class, viewing the British aristocracy and lower classes with disgust. "But a European mob must be a spectacle such as the lowest dregs of all New England would scarcely be able to furnish."²⁹ Cheever, nevertheless, sympathized with the reformers who sought to relieve the degradation and poverty of Britain's under-privileged. He rightly judged that the reform movement was not a "mere temporary excitement but deep, settled, genuine" and predicted that it would move forward steadily despite its losses in the recent elections.³⁰

The sufferings of the unemployed at Paisley greatly distressed him. He attributed the majority of their discomforts to the operation of the Corn Laws, which "benefit the noble and wealthy landholders at the expense of all other classes."³¹ He endorsed the principle of education for the lower classes, and lauded the street preachers who went among the city slums to preach the message of the Gospel to the downtrodden.³²

It was hardly expected that Cheever would limit his activities simply to observation. Once when addressing a crowd in Edinburgh from an *Established* Platform with an Episcopalian chairman, he casually remarked that American churches operated upon the principle of voluntary support.³³ Immediately there was an outcry from the audience, composed largely of Established church communicants. Establishment versus voluntary support was a cardinal question in Scotland with Dr. Chalmers as the great champion of the former and the Reverends Candlish, Guthrie, and Buchanan as the leaders of the free church movement. With these latter gentlemen Cheever built up a firm friendship which in later years became very useful to him. Regarding this controversy, Cheever correctly predicted that the state-supported church would fall. "It is essential to the purity of religion as Christ and his apostles proclaimed it."³⁴ In fact, in all of his predictions regarding future society, he was uncannily correct. Throughout his active life his judgment was usually sound, and he did not identify himself

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, December 23, 1837, 204.

³¹ *Ibid.*, November 18, 1837, 181.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, January 6, 1838, 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

with a cause until he was convinced it would be a successful one, at least temporarily.

Cheever enlisted heartily in the temperance and anti-slavery movements in Great Britain, much to the disgust of his merchant cousin, William Barrell.³⁵ Elizabeth Pease wrote to Angelina Grimke: "A spirited meeting has been held at Glasgow at which Dr. Cheever from Salem, Massachusetts, made an able and eloquent speech; doubtless this will be followed by meetings throughout the country."³⁶ These meetings were arranged by George Thompson, the British anti-slavery leader whom Cheever had welcomed to Salem, two years earlier.

Cheever did not leave England until late October, whereas he had originally intended to spend only two months in Britain. He next journeyed to France, Switzerland and Italy. In each country *religion*, especially the prospects of Protestantism overpowering Catholicism, and *scenery* were his chief interests. In December he arrived in Greece where he was hospitably entertained by missionaries who were working there under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.³⁷ Denouncing the obstacles which the Greek Orthodox clergy placed in the path of the American missionaries, he rejoiced that the Greeks were not under the yokes of the priests, that they read the Scriptures gladly, that the Government favored toleration, that the Greek Church upheld the atonement, Trinity, regeneration, and that the secular clergy were not celibates. Despite transubstantiation, the mass, and the worship of images, Cheever envisioned the day when Greek Orthodoxy and Protestantism would cooperate. Like all other travellers he greatly admired the magnificent ruins of Athens.³⁸

From Greece he turned aside from a projected trip to Palestine to visit Egypt. As elsewhere, the social and religious conditions of the populace were his chief preoccupation. In Alexandria, he visited one of the Pasha's schools, inspected the Royal Navy, attended a bazaar, and toured the ruins of a once glorious city. For the modern city he had no use. "This is now a wretched place, nor is there a solitary remnant of its former greatness" except "Cle-

³⁵ William Barrell to Henry Cheever (Undated).

³⁶ Barnes and Dumond, *Weld-Grimké Letters*, I, 405-406.

³⁷ *Observer*, May 26, 1838, 84.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1838, 100.

patra's needle." ³⁹ After a lengthy tour of Cairo and Thebes, the Pyramids, of which he has left a very minute and interesting description, and other points of interest, he concluded that Egypt was one of the most squalid, dirtiest, most miserable countries in the world. Yet he deemed it an interesting country and an object lesson to other nations, because it was an awful exhibition of the scourge of God upon a people who had disobeyed his Word.⁴⁰

April and May, 1838, were spent in Turkey where he made a detailed study of the Mohammedan religion. Accompanied by American missionaries he travelled the length of Armenia to observe the work which American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions appointees had recently inaugurated there. To Cheever, the virtues of Mohammedanism were meagre compared with those of Protestantism. "Mahomet gained this superiority by complying with men's passions instead of resisting them, by yielding to depraved human nature, instead of attempting to regenerate it, and by connecting the performance of certain external observances with the promise of sensual delight." ⁴¹ He applauded the Islamic principles of moderation in eating and particularly drinking. He lamented the fact that these virtues were gradually being undermined by the importation of Western culture, in which New England Rum played a conspicuous role.⁴²

After revisiting Italy and France, Cheever crossed over into Germany to study at the great university in Heidelberg.⁴³ At this period German universities were the best in the world and to have studied in Germany marked one as a potential scholar. "From morn till dewy eve, and later too, I am entirely absorbed in the study of the language; for the closest application is requisite if I would master it familiarly." ⁴⁴ This was not Cheever's first contact with the German language for he had learned the rudiments at Andover Theological Seminary.

³⁹ G. B. C. to G. G. Barrell, Alexandria, January 1, 1838; *Observer*, September 8, 1838, 141.

⁴⁰ *Observer*, January 5, 1839, 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, August 24, 1839. Cheever did not write this account from his journal till about a year after the trip actually occurred.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, February 9, 1839. This was copied, for publication, from a letter which Cheever wrote to a friend, dated at Heidelberg, December 6, 1838.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Because he had no friends in this strange land, he was very lonely. On several occasions he visited beer breweries for sociability and to secure first-hand information about student manners and customs. "Tobacco-smoke and beer seem to be the two most essential elements in the existence of the students."⁴⁵ German students generally impressed him as a more "Bacchanalian set" than the average run of students elsewhere.

As usual, the conflict between the two main factions of Christianity was a favorite theme, and Cheever spent a great deal of time studying the religious history of Germany. After careful analysis of the sermons of Hofacker and Boos, Catholic clergymen, Cheever confided to his brother that if it was a choice between the infidelity of some American Protestants, Unitarians in particular, and the Catholicism of Hofacker and Boos, he would choose the latter, despite the corruption existing in some branches of the Church.⁴⁶ However, this was simply to say that American orthodoxy was superior to all other religious beliefs.

When Nat and George had parted in the early spring of 1837, they had expected to be reunited in the fall. Various circumstances prevented the execution of this plan. The financial collapse and attendant ill-health of Uncle George Barrell was the first obstacle. Investing heavily in the Malaga-United States trade, G. G. Barrell had amassed a modest fortune by 1836. The Panic of 1837 caused the collapse of leading New York merchant houses and an eighty per cent reduction of the Malaga trade. Overnight Barrell found his life-savings swept away.⁴⁷ Always a follower of the distorted version of Epicureanism, Barrell sought refuge from his reverses in heavy drinking.⁴⁸ To be forced to vacate his expensive and elaborately furnished quarters in favor of a boarding house added to his woes.

Just at this time Nat's health again collapsed, and he was hurried away from Spain for a sea voyage on the *Isaac Ellis* which was bound for Buenos Aires. For the major portion of his journey he was confined to his cabin with severe asthmatic attacks.⁴⁹ After a nightmare experience at Buenos Aires, Nat en-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, December 7, 1839.

⁴⁷ G. G. Barrell to G. B. C., Malaga, August 15, 1837.

⁴⁸ Nat to his mother, at sea, October 26, 1837.

⁴⁹ Nat to his mother, Montevideo, November 24, 1837.

gaged passage on a Malaga-bound vessel; but because of the unreligious atmosphere he quit the boat only forty leagues from Buenos Aires even though it meant the complete surrender of the passage money.⁵⁰ Having awaited a more favorable sailing, he finally reached Spain in September, 1838. William Barrell, nephew of G. G. Barrell and Nat's cousin, also arrived at Malaga about the same time. Both instantly noticed a great change in the general health of their uncle. A sea voyage around the Mediterranean was deemed imperative. William and George Barrell had proceeded only as far as Barcelona, when the latter was seized with a violent cough accompanied by a great effusion of blood. Though attended by Spain's best physicians he died two days later of the consumption which had proved so fatal in many of the Cheever and Barrell clan.⁵¹

George Cheever, studying in Germany, did not hear of the misfortune till a later date. William Barrell at once returned to the States to make financial arrangements with his uncle's creditors. Nat remained alone at Malaga till April, when he was rejoined by George. They sailed immediately for America, arriving in Philadelphia on May 25, 1839.⁵²

George had been absent from his homeland for two and one-half years. In that period of time he had visited the principal countries of Europe, excepting Russia. With more than a casual interest in political and social problems, he had made an especially detailed study of Episcopalianism, European Catholicism, and Mohammedanism. When he left the United States in 1836 he was recognized by the religious public as a zealous temperance and anti-slavery advocate. The European tour did not alter his convictions on these subjects, but it did weaken his ardor. His foreign experiences, during which he had mastered French, Spanish, and German, at least, fashioned the tools for his next great crusade centering around a belief in the divine and world-wide mission of Protestantism.

⁵⁰ G. G. Barrell to G. B. C., Malaga, September 13, 1838.

⁵¹ William Barrell to his father, Barcelona, November 18, 1838.

⁵² G. B. C. to his mother, Philadelphia, May 25, 1839.

CHAPTER VII

FERVENT APOSTLE OF PROTESTANTISM

When George Cheever arrived in New York City in May, 1839, he was invited to supply the pulpit of the Allen Street Presbyterian Church, which at the moment had no permanent pastor.¹ His sermons were so satisfactory that he was asked to remain as settled pastor with a salary of \$1500. Since George was heavily in debt, he indicated a desire for \$1800 which the church readily promised to pay.² During Cheever's absence in Europe his relationships with the Howard Street Church of Salem had been severed and a new pastor installed. However, the new minister resigned almost as soon as Cheever returned home; and Cheever was asked to renew his charge over the old flock.³ After wavering between the two opportunities, Cheever finally chose the New York situation as the more profitable field of action.

Cheever's old friend, Nehemiah Adams, congratulated him upon the choice of Allen Street Church, adding the significant warning: "I hope with all my heart that certain men in New York will not succeed in committing you to any cause not directly connected with preaching the gospel. I look with some anxiety to the course which you will take for a year or two coming. There is now an excellent opportunity for you to be eminently useful, respected and beloved. . . ." ⁴ Adams had applauded Cheever's diatribes against Unitarianism but not those against slavery. He feared lest Cheever would be too strongly influenced by the Tappans, Gerrit Smith, Joshua Leavitt, and other anti-slavery leaders.

Another well-wisher was the Reverend George Shepard, former Hallowell pastor, and since 1836 professor of sacred theology at Bangor Theological Seminary. After serving as guest preacher in the Allen Street Church in early September, Shepard wrote to Cheever: "I find there is a high degree of enthusiasm in regard to yourself and your labors. . . . The state of feeling . . . is just what and *all* that a minister could desire in entering upon his labors,—perhaps with one exception,—the very high expectations

¹ Nathaniel Cheever to his mother, New York, June 15, 1839.

² Allen Street Presbyterian Church to G. B. C., New York, June 25, 1839; Joseph Hyde to G. B. C., New York, July 23, 1839.

³ William B. Dodge to G. B. C., Salem, July 9, 1839.

⁴ Nehemiah Adams to G. B. C., Boston, August 13, 1839.

which are entertained in regard to the efforts you will make, and the results of those efforts.”⁵ The parishioners fully expected that Cheever would become the “prince of New York preachers,” and that their church would be the most renowned in the city. Many expressed the wish that Cheever would be as earnest and fire-eating in his pulpit as in his writings. Shepard’s own advice was three-fold: (1) a wife, (2) improved pulpit manner, and (3) more thorough preparation of sermons.⁶

On his way to New York City in late September, Cheever spent a Sabbath at his former church in Salem; and so great was the outpouring of people to hear him that he momentarily hesitated to complete his journey to the metropolis.⁷ The Howard Street society urgently repeated their call, actually begging Cheever to remain with them on any terms.⁸ But his determination did not waver, although he was deeply touched to see so much affection for him displayed in Salem. In February, 1840, the Salem church again officially invited him to return. By this time he was too firmly entrenched in New York to be lured back to New England.⁹

Cheever attained immediate success at the Allen Street Church. Attendance at the religious services was very encouraging, and Cheever found his parishioners to be “kind, affectionate, pleasant and good.”¹⁰ In January, 1840, George reported: “My monthly concerts are full and exceedingly attentive. My people are very kind . . . and they think the congregation is increasing rapidly. The singing is getting to be famed for its excellence, even without an organ.”¹¹ That his earliest efforts among these people were unmarked by controversy, since he was concentrating upon theological subjects such as the fundamental doctrines of Protestantism, and justification by faith, may have partially accounted for his success.

The general religious atmosphere of New York City distressed Cheever, and he complained that the “Spirit of God” was noticeably lacking and that revivals were needed to bring the people to

⁵ George Shepard to G. B. C., New York, September 16, 1839.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Salem, September 29, 1839.

⁸ William B. Dodge and others to G. B. C., Salem, October 2, 1839.

⁹ William B. Dodge to G. B. C., Salem, February 19, 1840.

¹⁰ G. B. C. to his mother, New York, December 23, 1839.

¹¹ G. B. C. to his mother, New York, January 11, 1840.

a true state of piety.¹² "Religion here is altogether periodical. The churches serve the world and the devil the business part of the year, and then enter upon a sort of spasmodic action for the conversion of souls during the winter, to make up for it. Detestable as this convulsive epileptic shape of piety is, I find that a minister must give way to it."¹³ In common with the other city churches the Allen Street Church inaugurated a series of special prayer meetings for the purpose of converting the impenitent. The revival continued throughout the spring, and many new members were added to the society.¹⁴

The year 1840 was the quietest that Cheever had yet experienced in the ministry. Desirous of winning the hearts of his parishioners, he heeded Nehemiah Adams' advice and refrained from political preaching. Temperance and anti-slavery were no longer the staple of his preaching. The quarrel between the Garrisonians and the New York Committee, headed by Lewis Tappan and James Birney, which finally resulted in the separation of the anti-slavery forces, prompted Cheever to forget his former abolitionist zeal. He might also have been influenced by the experience of his brother, Henry, who after a year of tutoring in the South, had returned to New England in 1837 as an avowed abolitionist. Henry wrote a series of anti-slavery articles for the New York *Evangelist*, and as a delegate from Maine attended the annual conventions of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1838 and 1839. At the latter convention Henry became so disgusted with Garrison's radicalism and the fanaticism of women speakers, that he refused to attend further business sessions. Like many others, he clamored for a more Christian anti-slavery society.¹⁵

As for the temperance crusade, the reformed drunkards, under the banner of Washingtonianism, were occupying the center of attention from 1840 to 1843. Many of the Washingtonian lecturers ridiculed religion, and Cheever would never consent to support any movement whose corner-stone was not laid in religion.

Cheever spent the summer months of 1840 with Henry at

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ G. B. C. to his mother, New York, February 6, 1840.

¹⁴ G. B. C. to his mother, New York, April 16, 1840.

¹⁵ These facts were gleaned from Henry's correspondence from 1836 to 1839.

Saratoga Springs. As if following out Professor Shepard's advice Cheever now fell in love for the first time in his life.¹⁶ Strangely enough, the object of his affections was a slave-holding widow from the South, who possessed a sizeable fortune of several hundred thousand dollars. Henry excused the infrequency of George's letters by saying that the minister was "busy with other game, that is, novel-writing, verse-making, and conducting a humorous correspondence in behalf of Mrs. Florida White [the widow from Florida]. The visitors here have been all agog and have engaged him many times over."¹⁷ There were numerous accounts of "daily private soirees," "constant morning and evening walks to the springs," "picnics in the woods," "horseback rides to the Lake by moon-light," and "lonely promenades under the lipping pines."¹⁸

Naturally George was very reticent about describing his love-affair to his mother, but Henry was very faithful. He heartily approved George's choice, describing her as "intelligent, lovely, witty, accomplished, elegant, and fascinating."¹⁹ A Boston newspaper featured the development of the romance.²⁰ Mrs. Cheever gave her blessing to the match;²¹ but nothing happened. Although the lovers corresponded regularly during the fall months and George dined with her in great style on Christmas day, Nat, who was visiting in New York City, reported on December 29 that "this Southern rose will never bloom in our garden." The unwillingness of the widow to take up permanent residence in the North, and Cheever's financial insecurity wrote "finis" to the prospective marriage.

Eighteen forty-one opened a new chapter in the life of George Cheever. The nativist movement of the thirties had failed to win the active support of the church-going, middle-class Americans. Beginning in 1840, the anti-Catholic leaders adopted the strategy of demonstrating that Catholicism was an enemy of the Gospel, and that it was the duty of the Protestants "to destroy American Popery," else the evangelization of the world could not be accomplished.²²

¹⁶ Elizabeth to Henry, Hallowell, August 29, 1840.

¹⁷ Henry to Elizabeth, Saratoga Springs, August 11, 1840.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Elizabeth to Henry, Hallowell, August 29, 1840.

²¹ Mrs. Cheever to G. B. C., Hallowell, October 1, 1840.

²² Ray A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860* (New York,

When priests resisted the efforts of agents of the American Bible Society to distribute the King James version among poor immigrant families in the city, many Protestants accepted it as conclusive proof that the Catholics were seeking to undermine the foundations of Protestantism in America. Bible-reading in every American school-room was pronounced to be a goal of the American Bible Society in 1839 and 1840. This stand was enthusiastically endorsed by the powerful, Protestant, religious press. The Catholic organs angrily protested because the hierarchy did not want an unauthorized Bible studied by the adherents of the Catholic faith.²³

New York City was the center of a spectacular contest between Protestantism and Romanism over the proper place of the Bible in the school curriculum. The City school funds were controlled by the Public School Society, which was pledged "to inculcate the sublime truths of religion and morality contained in the Holy Scriptures."²⁴ Consequently Bible reading was a prominent feature of the New York City public school system. Early in 1840 the officials in charge of the Roman Catholic free schools applied for a "proportionate share" of the public funds. Immediately the Protestant press and pulpit, already gravely alarmed by the tremendous influx of foreigners from Catholic countries, rose to defend the Public School Society and the existing distribution of funds.²⁵ In April the Common Council voted unanimously to dismiss the petition of the Catholics. Once more the Catholics, under the aggressive leadership of Bishop Hughes, attempted to secure a favorable decision. After much fanfare and publicity the Council again, by a fifteen to one vote, refused the petition.

Failing to secure redress from the local authorities, Bishop Hughes appealed to the State legislature for a state-controlled educational system in which there would be no Bible-teaching. Governor Seward, after a careful investigation of the situation by John C. Spencer, Secretary of State and State Superintendent of Schools,

1938), 142; Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment*, Minneapolis, 1944, 351-377.

²³ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 142-143.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; Benson J. Lossing, *History of New York City* (New York, 1884), II, 576.

²⁵ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 143-145.

recommended to the opening session of the 1842 legislature, that the State system of non-sectarian instruction be extended to New York. Despite stout opposition of the Protestants, this suggestion was incorporated into law, but it proved to be an empty victory for the Catholics. William L. Stone, "exposer of Maria Monk but long a prominent nativist," became the new state superintendent of schools in July, 1842, and during his regime the Bible remained firmly entrenched in the public schools of New York.²⁶ In despair the Catholic Church turned to the establishment of parochial schools.

Throughout this lengthy controversy Cheever was more than an interested spectator. Possessor of an intimate knowledge of the worst evils of European Catholicism, as witnessed in France, Germany, Italy and Spain, where the Church was a political as well as a spiritual power, Cheever trained his siege guns of bitter invective upon the Catholics of America. In February, 1841, he delivered a well-received lecture on the "final conflict of the gospel with Romanism" in which he exposed the most pernicious incidents of Catholic history as typical of the whole church.²⁷ Other lectures of a similar nature quickly followed. In early 1842 he was scheduled to deliver one of a course of lectures before the Protestant Reformation Society at the Broadway Tabernacle. Nat's comment was, "He will probably describe Popery and its direful effects as he has witnessed them abroad and I expect quite 'absquatulate' the Catholics and blow them so high with his surcharged bombshell that they'll be a long time coming down."²⁸ In May, 1841, Cheever had made a brief address at the anniversary celebration of the Foreign Evangelical Society, and in May, 1842, was its principal convention speaker. (The paramount project of this society was the conversion of Catholic France to Protestantism as the first step in a world-wide movement.) Abusing the Catholics and calling for the downfall of the "Anti-Christ" [Popery], he exhorted his listeners to greater labors on behalf of evangelical religion. "I say we need a new baptism in the fire of individual, Scriptural truth, and especially, we need a new discovery of the truth of justification by faith"²⁹—as opposed to authoritarian Popery.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 145-155; Lossing, *History of New York*, 577.

²⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Boston, February 3, 1841.

²⁸ Nat to Elizabeth, New York, December 28, 1841.

²⁹ *Evangelist*, May 12, 1842, 74.

In December, 1842, Cheever was invited to address the annual meeting of the powerful New England Society of New York, composed entirely of descendants of the Puritans, and dedicated to the glorification of Puritan ideals. This afforded a wonderful opportunity to exploit the virtues of Puritanism at the expense of Catholicism. Cheever, speaking on the subject of the *Elements of National Greatness*,³⁰ extolled native American principles. Among these were "good parentage,"—"As natives of New England, we are proud of the claims of a Puritan and a Protestant ancestry"; "a high regard for the Word of God"; "that grand principle of Protestantism, which is *Private Judgment of the Scriptures*"; "justification by faith"; a "Christian education" based on the teachings of the Bible in public schools; the "Regenerating Spirit of God"; and others. Turning to the chief moral problems facing America, he listed Romanism, idolatry, slavery. Charging that the Catholic hierarchy sought to force its beliefs upon others, he cautioned Protestants to be wary because the Pope expected to capture the Presidency of the United States within ten years. "I confess that I am afraid of the action of Romanism upon my country's liberties. I am afraid of the influence of whatever is afraid of the Bible."³¹ Because of this fear, he called for the extermination of Catholicism in America.

Cheever's lectures were not confined to New York City. In 1841 and 1842 there were frequent addresses to lyceums and churches in Boston, Salem, New Haven and Hartford—all on the subject of comparative religion. In many of his lectures Cheever advocated that the Federal Government limit immigration from pauper, Catholic countries, and that naturalization laws be stiffened so that a twenty-one year residence would be a prerequisite to American citizenship.³² As commencement orator at Dartmouth College in July, 1842, and at Bowdoin a month later, he delivered discourses in which he ascribed all progress to the Reformation and all retrogression to Romanism.³³ These blasts at the foundations

³⁰ George B. Cheever, *The Elements of National Greatness* (New York, 1843). By vote of the society, December 31, 1842, a copy of the address was requested for publication. Cheever complied with their wishes on January 10, 1843.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

³² *Ibid.*, 34-35.

³³ G. B. C. to his mother, Saratoga Springs, August 3, 1842; Nat to his mother, New York, July 9, 1842.

of the Catholic Church were not allowed to pass unnoticed. Bishop Hughes, in his influential *Freeman's Journal*,³⁴ lashed back at Cheever, as he did at all who sought to attack Catholics.

Another monumental attack against Catholics was delivered by Cheever before the anniversary sessions of the American Bible Society in May, 1843.³⁵ Extolling the Bible Society because it sought to bring the light of God's Word to those who lived in perpetual darkness and ignorance, he turned upon Romanism because it did not freely accept the Bible and because it relied upon the authority of an infallible Pope. Recounting the glories of the Reformation he brought up the historical evidence to illustrate the despotism and inquisitional cruelty of Rome. Cheever, a fundamentalist of the narrowest type, believing absolutely in the Word of God as revealed in the Old and New Testaments alike, genuinely feared the power of the Pope, if Protestantism could not break down the grip that the Catholic Church was tightening over the new immigrants from Germany and Ireland.³⁶

At this meeting of the Bible Society, Cheever introduced an appropriate resolution:

Resolved, That the history of the Roman and other Eastern Churches, which have multiplied ministers, rituals, and church edifices, but have dispensed, in a great measure, with the written word, should admonish the friends of religion in the New World not to suffer such a destitution of that word to prevail amongst us.³⁷

At about this same time George Cheever preached a powerful sermon directly relating to the school controversy in New York City. He defended the King James version of the Bible as an example of the purest English, as a teacher of good habits, a dispeller of evil thoughts, and as the only means by which the immigrants could be won to Protestantism. "What all the world over, is the cause of ignorance, degradation, and misery, marking those countries which, when the light of the Reformation raised Protestant nations to liberty and happiness, remained beneath the darkness of the Papal despotism? It is the absence of the word of God, and

³⁴ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 260.

³⁵ *Evangelist*, May 11, 1843, 75.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

the slavery of debasing mummeries and superstitions; a bondage to rites, constituting, at the will of the priest, the only channels of salvation; an education of intellectual servitude, without one element of spiritual freedom mingled with it."³⁸

Sermons and lectures were not the only channels through which Cheever reached the public. He wrote many articles for the partisan religious press such as the *New England Puritan* and the *Biblical Repository*.³⁹ All of his pronouncements were accorded full publicity, especially by the religious papers such as the *Evangelist* and *Observer* of New York and the *Recorder* of Boston. Many of his addresses were printed in pamphlet form and distributed widely. Two such were *The Religion of Experience and That of Imitation* delivered before the Society of Inquiry on Missions at Amherst College in August, 1843, and *Characteristics of the Christian Philosopher: A Discourse Commemorative of the Virtues and Attainments of Rev. James Marsh*⁴⁰ before the Alumni of the University of Vermont, August, 1843. Both of these addresses constituted a defense of orthodox Protestantism at the expense of Transcendentalism, Episcopalianism, and Catholicism.

The crowning achievement of Cheever's campaign against the Roman Church took the form of two addresses at the Broadway Tabernacle in January, 1844, on the subject *The Hierarchical Despotism: Lectures on the Mixture of Civil and Ecclesiastical Power in the Governments of the Middle Ages in Illustration of the Nature and Progress of Despotism in the Romish Church*. These lectures were inspired by one by Bishop Hughes on civil and ecclesiastical government of the Middle Ages in which Hughes advanced the thesis that Papal despotism had preserved Christianity and kept alive civil freedom.⁴¹ Before capacity audiences Cheever poured forth the sordid details of religious persecutions, the sale of indulgences, and the personal sins of Catholic clergy. If possible, Cheever painted black pages even blacker. What made the Catho-

³⁸ *Ibid.*, June 8, 1843, 89.

³⁹ Nat to Elizabeth, New York, March 8, 1843.

⁴⁰ James Marsh was a former President of the University of Vermont and at his decease professor of philosophy at that institution. Henry B. Parkes, "James Marsh," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XII (New York, 1933), 299-300.

⁴¹ *Evangelist*, January 25, 1844, 4. These lectures appeared in book form in 1844.

lics most angry was the charge that the Roman church in the United States was guilty of the same crimes as the Medieval Church. True, the Catholic Church had not become Americanized to the extent that Isaac Thomas Hecker later developed it; but neither was the American Church guilty of all the charges brought against it by George B. Cheever.

Catholics were not alone in feeling the sting of Cheever's denunciations. Episcopalians, among whom there was a very marked High Church movement in the early forties, came in for their share of abuse. Following the lead of John Henry Newman in England and Bishop Hobart in America, the Anglo-Catholic party had gained ground rapidly.⁴² As these High Church leaders drew nearer to Rome, the Low Church Episcopalians and non-ritualistic sects began to denounce them in the same manner in which full-fledged Catholics were condemned. Cheever, a keen observer of British Episcopalianism, did not hesitate to enter the fray, much to the disgust of his mother and sister who had always had a kindly word for Episcopalianism.⁴³

With the commencement address at Amherst in August, 1843, he began his vigorous assaults on the High Church movement.⁴⁴ In December, 1843, there was an acrid dispute between Episcopalians and the *New York Observer*, occasioned by the latter's charge that the Episcopal Church had joined the Greek and Armenian hierarchies in opposing the activities of representatives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the Near East.⁴⁵ Cheever, who had visited the missionary outposts in Turkey, supported the contentions of the *Observer* with a series of anonymous articles in the *Evangelist*. Cheever affirmed that Episcopal missionaries in the Near East labored "not to convert men to Christ, but to supplant a successful mission, because it does not hold to Episcopacy, confirmation and the liturgy."⁴⁶

⁴² Sweet, *History of Religions*, 380-385; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 178-180.

⁴³ Elizabeth to G. B. C., Hallowell, December 4, 1843; Elizabeth to G. B. C., Hallowell, April 15, 1844.

⁴⁴ George B. Cheever, *The Religion of Experience and That of Imitation* (New York, 1843).

⁴⁵ *Evangelist*, December 7, 1843.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* These anonymous articles are proved to be Cheever's by a letter, G. B. C. to Elizabeth, New York, December 13, 1843.

Many other Cheever articles, under the title "No Bishop, No Church," condemned High Church formalism.

In January, 1844, another controversy between Puritanism and Episcopacy broke out in New York City with Dr. Wainwright and Dr. Potts as the leading antagonists.⁴⁷ Cheever was so occupied with his lectures on Bunyan that he could take no active part; but he made sure that Puritanism was aggressively upheld in the *Evangelist*, of which he was secretly an editor.⁴⁸ In April he struck a significant blow with a two-hour lecture on "A Church without a Bishop" in the Broadway Tabernacle. William Barrell wrote of it: "George gave us his *chef d'oeuvre* last evening and it was a masterpiece of satire, profound research, and eloquence and listened to by a breathless audience. . . ." ⁴⁹ This was Cheever's parting volley before leaving for another European vacation.

Cheever's anti-Catholic and anti-High Church Episcopalian endeavors were only a fragment of the heavy load that he bore from 1841 to 1844. The program of the Allen Street Church was very demanding of his time, and he apparently applied himself more diligently than at Salem. In March, 1841, he invited the Reverend E. N. Kirk, the Secretary of the Foreign Evangelical Society and a revivalist of note, to assist in a series of evangelistic services at the Allen Street Church.⁵⁰ Tremendous congregations were attracted, the inquiring meetings were largely attended, and many new converts were attracted into the society.⁵¹ Although Kirk was summoned to other cities for similar purposes, he was back with Cheever in May; and the services were successfully renewed.⁵² Elizabeth Cheever journeyed to New York for the May anniversaries; and was delighted with George's church, although she lamented that it was not located in a more central portion of the city. She felt George was much beloved by his people, and apparently was destined to a long ministry in their midst.⁵³ In November, 1841, Nat reported that the congregation was still increasing and

⁴⁷ G. B. C. to Nat, New York, January 10, 1844.

⁴⁸ G. B. C. to his mother, New York, January 10, 1844.

⁴⁹ William Barrell to Elizabeth, New York, April 20, 1844.

⁵⁰ Nat to Elizabeth, New York, March 23, 1841.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Elizabeth to her mother, New York, May 18, 1841.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

that the state of affairs was "pleasant and encouraging."⁵⁴ Each spring the revival services were repeated. Revivals were the usual methods of building up the churches, but they must have been a strain upon both pastor and parishioners.

To supplement his ministerial salary Cheever prepared a series of lectures on the "Antiquities of English Literature" which he delivered to a class of thirty ladies organized by Mrs. Washington,⁵⁵ a personal friend. This course was conducted during the winter season of 1842 and 1843, and netted the lecturer the sum of \$200.⁵⁶ Cheever also taught a class in English Literature at Miss Green's school for three days a week. For this service he received \$50 a term. Another \$75 a quarter was forthcoming from a two hour a week tutorship of Mr. Suffern's daughters.⁵⁷ Literature was Cheever's second love and these periods of instruction, besides being financially remunerative, were a great joy to him.

In 1842 Cheever was induced to publish a book entitled *Punishment by Death: Its Authority and Expediency* in which he upheld capital punishment with three types of argument: sanction by God, the practice and experience of nations, and the testimony of the human conscience. The decade of the thirties had witnessed a diminution of the number of crimes for which the death penalty was mandatory. In some quarters there was a demand for its total abolition.⁵⁸ Cheever, alarmed by this growing agitation and convinced from his study of the Old Testament that the Mosaic code was ordained by God, determined to thwart this movement for more liberal treatment of murderers. He regarded the abolishment of the death penalty for petty offenses as a humanitarian move, but did not view murder in the same light. "He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword."⁵⁹ Cheever believed that God's commandment to Noah, "Who so sheddeth men's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," settled forever the question

⁵⁴ Nat to Elizabeth, New York, November 28, 1842.

⁵⁵ The wife of a prominent New York doctor under whom Nat was studying.

⁵⁶ Nat to Elizabeth, New York, October 17, 1842.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; Nat to Elizabeth, New York, November 28, 1842.

⁵⁸ The first state to abolish capital punishment was Michigan (1847). B. Paul Neuman, "Case Against Capital Punishment," *Fortnightly Review*, LII (September, 1889), 322-333.

⁵⁹ George B. Cheever, *Punishment by Death* (New York, 1842), 50.

of capital punishment for homicide. He also quoted from the teachings of Jesus and Paul to prove, to his own satisfaction, that the New Testament upheld Old Testament principles.⁶⁰ A rather peculiar argument for retention of the death penalty was that it would hasten the conversion of the sinner, whereas life imprisonment would never force the killer to face the issue of impending death, and hence he would never be converted.⁶¹ A more familiar argument was that punishment by death tended to decrease crime because the certainty of the penalty deterred the criminal.⁶² He pointed out that the criminal rarely served the full term if he was sentenced to life imprisonment, which was "altogether insufficient in its energy of terror and power of restraint."⁶³ These latter arguments were incidental to the main one derived from Cheever's absolute belief in the divine sanction of the death penalty.

In January, 1843, Cheever was challenged by J. L. O'Sullivan⁶⁴ to a public debate on this subject. The discussion was held in the Broadway Tabernacle before crowded audiences on two different occasions. Cheever's arguments were essentially those appearing in his book. The *Evangelist* reported that O'Sullivan's attempt to overthrow the Biblical argument was futile and that his conduct was "sophistical and not in good temper." For Cheever it was "a complete and overwhelming triumph and felt to be so in all parts of the immense assemblage."⁶⁵ The Reverend J. C. Lovejoy of Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, remarked that Cheever's defense was "equal to any three of the best orations of Cicero or Demosthenes."⁶⁶ These debates strengthened Cheever's popularity among the middle-class New Yorkers.

Undoubtedly the most popular course of lectures ever given by Cheever was that on John Bunyan, which he presented in the winter of 1843-1844. The substance of the lectures was a commentary on the life of John Bunyan and the lessons to be derived

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 50-54.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 102-110.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 127.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁶⁴ *Evangelist*, February 9, 1843, 22.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* These debates, coupled with additional arguments, appeared in book form in 1846 under title of *Defence of Capital Punishment*.

⁶⁶ J. C. Lovejoy to Elizabeth, Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, February 27, 1843.

from *Pilgrim's Progress*. Brilliantly written in Cheever's most picturesque style, these lectures attracted great throngs for many weeks. George Cheever, who rarely commented upon his successes, was really enthusiastic about the reception of these lectures. "The lectures on Bunyan go grandly,"⁶⁷ "My lectures on Bunyan are exceedingly successful,"⁶⁸ and "My lectures on Bunyan are attended by great crowds." William Barrell's reaction was: "His lectures have created a great sensation and hundreds crowd to hear them who cannot gain admittance. I have attended them all and like all who have had that good fortune have been delighted."⁶⁹ A month later, he said, "'Cheever's Lectures' in the religious and the Italian opera in the music world are the all-engrossing topics of conversation just now. Poor fellow he works too hard, next time you write him throw in a little caution, but don't say it was at my suggestion."⁷⁰

Too much work and too little play took its toll of Cheever's strength. The regular parish duties supplemented by lectures on Catholicism, Episcopalianism, Capital Punishment, and John Bunyan, his education courses, editorial duties, and abstract theological writings inevitably spelled a breakdown in health. It came suddenly in April when Cheever was delivering his lecture on "A Church Without a Bishop." Unable to finish, he handed his manuscript to a cleric who read it for him.⁷¹ A visit to the Swiss Alps was decreed to be the most effective palliative. One of his New York friends, a non-parishioner, Henry Hurlbut,⁷² furnished Cheever with his passage money. Other admiring friends presented him a purse designed to cover his expenses in Europe. Prior to his embarkation, he arranged for the relinquishment of pastoral duties at Allen Street Church so that he might devote full time to the editorship of the *Evangelist* at \$1600,⁷³ effective upon his return. Actually he had been assuming the greater share of the editorial burden during the previous six months, although the public had not been aware of the fact.

⁶⁷ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, New York, December 13, 1843.

⁶⁸ G. B. C. to his mother, New York, January 10, 1844.

⁶⁹ William Barrell to Elizabeth, New York, January 10, 1844.

⁷⁰ William Barrell to Elizabeth, New York, February 19, 1844.

⁷¹ William Barrell to Elizabeth, New York, April 20, 1844.

⁷² G. B. C. to Nat, New York, April 29, 1844; G. B. C. to Nat, New York, May 9, 1844.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VIII

EDITOR OF AMERICA'S LEADING RELIGIOUS WEEKLY

George Cheever's second voyage to Europe was primarily undertaken to effect a restoration of good health rather than for concentrated study. Nevertheless, he did engage to write a series of letters for publication in the *Evangelist*. Leaving New York City late in May, he reached Liverpool after a pleasant crossing of only eighteen days. He was greatly impressed by the general quietness of the huge seaport and especially by the meekness of its "cabbies." Comparing these characteristics with the hubbub of New York City, its dirtiness, and the insolence of its cabmen,¹ he found Liverpool a much pleasanter city than the American metropolis.

He was glad to note that American editions of British authors were confiscated if brought into England. He considered such seizures warranted lest "we should print the English authors into poverty, on their own ground, and in their own markets, with their own words, by our cheap fabrications."² As an author, Cheever appreciated the protection of copyright laws.

Always ready to repeat the worst about the Catholics, he handed along the story of a fellow passenger, a Catholic priest, who falsely asserted that he had nothing to declare to the customs officials.³ Well aware of British despotism in Ireland, he still maintained that it would be a sad day if British control were relinquished for in its stead an inquisitional and intolerant Romanish government would be installed.⁴ Cheever never could see any good in anything closely akin to Catholicism, and his European letters reflected this bias. The growth of Puseyism, which sought a revival within the Church of England of doctrines such as the apostolical succession and the holy catholic church, greatly alarmed Cheever; and he constantly attacked its "insidious" influence.

When in France, he visited the cathedrals of Rouen, the Chamber of Deputies, the Royal library, the Church of the Made-

¹ New York *Evangelist*, August 1, 1844, 122.

² *Ibid.*, August 8, 1844, 126.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

leine ("just like going to a theatre"), and other historic spots.⁵ Art galleries seemed to have no particular appeal to him. He preferred the beauties of nature as created by the hand of God rather than by man. Most of the summer was spent among the Swiss Alps, whose scenery he considered to be the best in the world. In Geneva he made lasting friendships with the Protestant leaders, Malan and D'Aubigne.⁶ These experiences and travels in Switzerland were later incorporated into a book under the title, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in the Shadow of Mount Blanc and the Jungfrau Alps*. Except for its predominant religious atmosphere this is still a very interesting and readable travel story.⁷

Cheever visited Northern Italy once again, and was distressed to discover that Catholicism was even more firmly entrenched than in the thirties. Fearing Rome's aggressiveness, he remarked: "It is difficult to say to what extremes the new spirit of intolerance and bigotry in the Romish church may go."⁸ Cheever was not a passive on-looker. Upon his return to the United States he was instrumental in raising large sums of money for the relief of the Waldensians, the Italian Protestants.

Impatient to return to his work in the United States, he embarked from Havre on the first of November. He was bound for Cuba where he expected to meet Nat whom he supposed to be at Trinidad.⁹ Nat, after completing a preliminary course of study under Dr. Hubbard¹⁰ of Hallowell, had entered a New York medical school in the fall of 1840. Despite incessant ill-health he struggled through his courses, receiving a degree in the spring of 1843.¹¹ Almost immediately his health utterly collapsed. Hoping to regain physical strength, he selected Trinidad, Cuba, as a permanent abode. Here he expected that his knowledge of Spanish would enable him to build up a lucrative medical practice. After

⁵ *Evangelist*, August 29, 1844, 138.

⁶ *Ibid.*, October 24, 1844, 170.

⁷ George B. Cheever, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in the Shadow of Mount Blanc and the Jungfrau Alps*, New York, 1846.

⁸ *Evangelist*, November 7, 1844.

⁹ G. B. C. to his mother, Havre, October 31, 1844.

¹⁰ This was John Hubbard who was one of Maine's leading doctors. Subsequently he entered politics and became a two-term Governor of Maine.

¹¹ Nathaniel Cheever to Elizabeth, New York, March 18, 1843.

having successfully fulfilled all the requirements of Cuban law concerning the medical profession, he suffered a relapse.¹² Realizing that death was near, he tried to reach the homeland, but passed away at sea on October 23, 1844.¹³ Entirely ignorant of these events, George Cheever reached Cuba in the middle of December. Naturally George was shocked and dejected; but the light of triumphant faith shone brightly through the gloom, for George was sure that Nat now dwelled with his God. "How blessed the hope and belief that he now looks back upon his early death and earthly sufferings and disappointments . . . with delightful wonders and unspeakable gratitude to God."¹⁴ To be sure, Cheever was a minister of the gospel and was expected to possess great faith. Yet ministers were not alone in conversing freely about the great imponderables of religion. Hundreds of Cheever letters from as many different people were devoted exclusively to a discussion of religious principles. To the religious of those days the *millennium* was very real and very near.

Travelling leisurely through the seaboard states, Cheever preached as he came northward. He was "most hospitably" entertained in Charleston, South Carolina, where a "very liberal collection" for the Waldensians was secured.¹⁵ Evidently Cheever's early anti-slavery zeal had not reasserted itself since 1836 else he would not have been welcomed in South Carolina. The wanderer was also cordially received in Richmond and other Southern strongholds. The Waldensian lectures which he delivered en route were later successfully repeated in New York and New England.

In Washington, D. C., Cheever revealed a keen appreciation for the native school of fine arts. He expressed the hope that the newly-founded Smithsonian Institute would become America's greatest library and depository of fine arts treasures. He ranked Greenough's statue of Washington the equal of Italian sculpture, modern or ancient:

Now an artist capable of such a work ought to be employed continually in adorning the Capitol with similar productions. A gal-

¹² Nathaniel to his mother, Havana, April 16, 1844; Nathaniel to William Barrell, Trinidad, September 16, 1844.

¹³ Samuel McLean to Mrs. Cheever, Delaware Bay, November 2, 1844.

¹⁴ G. B. C. to his mother, Richmond, Virginia, February 1, 1845.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

lery of the Fine Arts at Washington, on right principles, would be quite as useful an expenditure of money, as the splendid building of the Patent Office or Treasury. And with such artists as Greenough, Crawford and Powers in sculpture, and Huntington and perhaps we may have another Allston, in painting, there might be in republican America, ere long, a native collection so chaste and grand, so beautiful and truly moral, that it should become quite the admiration and example of the world. But if native genius is suffered to go abroad in search of patronage, we shall never have a school of our own.¹⁶

Cheever, who had had opportunities of viewing the richest art treasures of the Old World, evidently preferred contemporary American art to the old classical forms.

The New York *Evangelist* had announced the appointment of Cheever as an editor in its issue of November 28, 1844: "Dr. Cheever¹⁷ is widely known as one of the ablest and most vigorous writers of the day. His commanding talents, his scholarly acquirements and extensive information, genuine and particular, acquired by his travels on the Continent and in the East, and his genuine Protestant spirit, peculiarly adapt him to the sphere he has chosen." As soon as he landed back in the United States, Cheever began a series of editorial letters chiefly devoted to Protestantism in France, temperance, and the degradation of the negro, without specific references to the abolition of slavery.

Cheever had been absent during the campaign of 1844 between Clay and Polk. As an idolizer of Clay and Whig principles, he was extremely disappointed in the election's outcome. When in Washington in the spring of 1845, he attended the closing debates on the issue of Texas annexation. Long convinced of slavery's immorality, he opposed any extension of slave territory: "We might with perfect justice say to her [Texas] 'If you will come in as a free state, we will admit you but not otherwise.'" ¹⁸

As an editorial writer Cheever covered the anniversary meetings, the annual conventions of the various religious and humanitarian societies, in New York and Boston, 1845. The Christian Alliance, whose chief goal was the distribution of Protestant Bibles

¹⁶ *Evangelist*, March 6, 1845.

¹⁷ Cheever had been awarded an honorary D.D. by New York University in the summer of 1844. It was conferred *in absentia*.

¹⁸ *Evangelist*, March 6, 1845.

in Italy, received very favorable notice. "The Christian Alliance is destined, we think, to take a deep hold of the hearts of the people, and to accomplish great things."¹⁹ This reaction was expected from Cheever since it was in behalf of this society that his Waldensian lectures were being delivered.

Cheever was dismayed by the infidelity displayed by the orators at the anti-slavery conventions and considered it his "painful duty" to administer a sharp rebuke:

As we looked on the strange scene in Marlboro Chapel [Boston], we thought of the old proverb, When the devil cannot stop the progress of a good cause he spoils it by taking hold of it himself. This saying is singularly illustrated by the speeches and principles of many in this country, who under the name and guise of the abolitionists are making war upon the best interests of society. For there never was a purer, nobler, more important enterprise of benevolence undertaken, than that of redeeming man from slavery, and of making all men in our own country equal sharers in the blessings of freedom. Nor was there ever an enterprise more completely perverted from its tendencies, by enlisting in and under its shadows materials so detestable, and principles so outrageous to the good sense and Christian feeling of the community. There are men who have done their utmost to render the abolition enterprise a sink, through which to put forth a tide of infidelity and anti-Christian sentiment enough to make the Society to stink in the nostrils of the whole nation.²⁰

In 1845 Cheever was unwilling to associate with agitators who shouted "No Union with slaveholders" or cried that emancipation would not come unless by bloodshed or over the "ruins of the American Church and the grave of the Union." Orthodoxy was still too dear to Cheever to be overridden by anti-slavery zeal. Fourteen years later he would find himself forced to seek refuge in the company of Garrison, Parker Pillsbury, Wendell Phillips, and Oliver Johnson.

After attending these Boston anniversaries, Cheever journeyed eastward to the familiar banks of the Kennebec. His first editorial letter from Maine was a continuation of the attack on the infidel doctrines of certain unnamed, but easily nameable abolitionists.²¹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, May 29, 1845.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, June 12, 1845, 94.

²¹ *Ibid.*, June 19, 1845.

Others were devoted to a description of the beautiful Kennebec scenery and to the insane asylum at Augusta. The fine location of this institution and its humanitarian treatment of patients was a joy to Cheever: "It is not a prison, as so many of our asylums for the insane have been."²² This portrays Cheever as an enthusiastic disciple of Dorothea Dix's reform movement regarding care of the insane.

Returning to New York at the urgent insistence of W. H. Bidwell,²³ the co-editor, Cheever began a series of editorials on the old themes of Protestantism, Catholicism, revivals, and orthodoxy. Although these were recurrent themes, they were popular and satisfied the religious, middle-class public to which they were chiefly directed. Orestes Brownson, the recent convert to Catholicism, came into Cheever's line of fire. For Brownson's benefit, Cheever brought up the whole history of Papal persecution as an example of the United States' failure if Brownson's dream of Papal domination in America was realized.²⁴

The pleasures of the theatres and the pitfalls awaiting the innocent indulgers were frequently exposed.²⁵ The famous "soda-water" incident in the life of John B. Gough, the reformed drunkard, was fully "aired" with an apparent readiness to forgive the temperance orator for his indiscretions.²⁶

One of the foremost political debates of the day related to the Oregon boundary dispute. From the beginning of the crucial stage in this controversy the *Evangelist* pursued a "no-war" policy. After Britain had declined the fourth offer of the American Government to accept the line of the 49th parallel, Polk, in his annual message to Congress of December, 1845, announced the administration's intention to press the "fifty-four-forty" claim; and he invoked the Monroe Doctrine.²⁷ Polk's bristling speech was accorded a "good press" in the United States; and both England and this country seemed to be drifting into war. On December 25, 1845,

²² *Ibid.*, June 25, 1845, 102.

²³ W. H. Bidwell to G. B. C., New York, June 5, 11, 16, 1845.

²⁴ *Evangelist*, August 9, 1845.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, November 27, 1845, 90.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902* (Washington, 1903), IV, 397.

the *Evangelist*, greatly alarmed by the belligerent tone of the Congressional debates on Oregon, came forth with a leading editorial on the "madness and wickedness of war." It advised the administration to pursue a compromise policy that peace might be preserved.²⁸ "We trust in God, that in his mercy he will confound the councils of the war-breathers and war-makers on both sides of the Atlantic and that he will keep peace in all our borders."

Although neither country really wanted war over Oregon, neither seemed willing to retreat; and war fever mounted rapidly in the early days of 1846.²⁹ On February 12, the *Evangelist* scored President Polk for his refusal to submit the dispute to arbitration. "The refusal of President Polk to submit the question . . . to an amicable arbitration, has placed England in a position of great right and magnanimity and our country in an attitude the most intensely selfish, odious, and disreputable."³⁰

To Cheever, arbitration was the "most Christian" mode of settlement of international disagreements ever proposed. With its widespread adoption, Cheever felt a warless world would be established.³¹ The issue of March 12, 1846, under the title, *Claims of the Gospel Against War*, listed some of the reasons why the United States should not fight Britain: (1) War arrested the spread of the gospel; (2) war undermined morals; (3) war overturned the Sabbath; (4) war stopped revivals; (5) war drove the spirit of love from men's hearts; (6) war distracted men's minds from eternal realities and fastened them on the anxieties of the moment; (7) war trained men to be brutes. Cheever's primary objection to war was religious, and he never seemed to be particularly bothered by the much stronger economic arguments against a British-American war. Although Cheever's arguments closely resembled those advanced by the organized peace movement in America, Cheever appears never to have taken an active part in the affairs of these societies. True to form, he preferred to play an independent role.

Throughout the critical period, Cheever closely followed the Congressional debates, always lauding the conciliatory speeches

²⁸ *Evangelist*, December 25, 1845, 206.

²⁹ Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York, 1940), 240.

³⁰ *Evangelist*, February 12, 1846, 26.

³¹ *Ibid.*

and condemning the inflammatory ones.³² In April he had occasion to "cross swords" with his old adversary, Lewis Cass, who delivered a bold "spread-eagle" speech in the Senate. "His passion after war, and his efforts to provoke it, are worthy of all reprobation."³³ Until a final settlement was effected, the *Evangelist* fed its readers a steady stream of pacifist propaganda. Although Cheever, in the past, had frequently indulged in a little twisting of the lion's tail,³⁴ in the Oregon crisis he constantly adhered to the point of view that a third conflict with England would be a tragedy for Western civilization.

The *Evangelist* took no notice of the dispute with Mexico until Polk's war message of May 11, 1846. Three days later Cheever voiced his opposition to an expansionist war: "We have reason to fear that the iniquitous counsels which are plunging our country into a war with Mexico, are but the beginning of the scourge of God upon us for our sins."³⁵ A fortnight later the *Evangelist* attacked the philosophy of those who chanted "our country, right or wrong";³⁶ and it pronounced the Mexican adventure an "immoral and unjust" war.³⁷ No adherent of the Army policy that a vigorous offense was the best defense, Cheever protested against a complete subjugation of Mexico.

Later there was a slight shift of emphasis, and the *Evangelist* veered toward the position that it was the duty of citizens to support the government even if it was an unrighteous war.³⁸ This change may have been induced by a disagreement between Bidwell and Cheever; or perhaps because such men as Cassius Clay,³⁹ an anti-slavery leader of Kentucky, demanded that the *Evangelist* endorse the war. Throughout the conflict this religious journal was most interested in the spiritual welfare of the soldiers, and actively promoted the distribution of tracts to the army.⁴⁰

When Cheever severed his connection with the *Evangelist*,

³² *Ibid.*, March 19, 1846, 46.

³³ *Ibid.*, April 9, 1846, 58.

³⁴ Cheever, *Punishment by Death*, 100.

³⁵ *Evangelist*, May 14, 1846.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, May 28, 1846, 86.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, June 4, 1846, 90.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, June 18, 1846, 98.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, July 9, 1846, 110.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, June 18, 1846, 98.

October 29, 1846, he gave vent to his anti-war sentiments. This seems to indicate that he had grudgingly consented to the altered *Evangelist* policy.

Now we are in the midst of a war most expensive both of blood and treasure, a war which already has cost more than it would have taken to have purchased peacefully the whole of California, and whatever other dominion south of Texas we had needed. There never was, perhaps in the history of nations, considering our position, education, religious light, and declared pacific principles an instance of a war more transcendently and flagrantly needless. And every additional step of massacre is more and more needless. For the dominion of the planetary universe we would not bear the responsibility and receive the retribution of the authors of this war, when the account is given in to God.⁴¹

Cheever viewed the war as an imperialistic and immoral venture in the eyes of God, since it was the bullying of a small nation by a large and powerful neighbor. There never was any reference to the war as a "slave conspiracy" although Cheever did blame Polk for engineering the whole scheme.

After Joseph Smith's "revelation" sanctioning polygamy, the popularity of the Mormons in Nauvoo, Illinois, waned rapidly, finally culminating in the murder of Smith and the expulsion of his followers from their "Garden of Eden."⁴² Early in 1846 the first disciples began the long trek through the wilderness to Utah. In September, after a pitched battle with the Anti-Mormons the rest of the "faithful" were forcefully ejected from Illinois.⁴³ These events focused attention on the Mormons, and led Cheever to attack polygamy which his Bible research had taught him to be unsanctioned by God.⁴⁴ Although Cheever opposed polygamy, there was a noticeable lack of the venom and fire which had once characterized his rebukes of dissenting sects. Perhaps this can be explained by his great interest at this time in the Evangelical Alliance, a unifying movement within Protestantism and an ancestor of the present Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.⁴⁵

As editor of the *Evangelist*, Cheever forcefully dealt with

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, October 29, 1846, 174.

⁴² M. R. Werner, *Brigham Young* (New York, 1931), 202-203.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Evangelist*, October 15, 1846, 166.

⁴⁵ Sweet, *Religions in America*, 519.

political, religious, and moral questions of the day. In his political discussions he was guided chiefly by his religious beliefs, and often missed the political and economic implications of the disputes under consideration. When it was a moral question, Cheever turned to the Bible for advice. Whatever his Scriptural interpretations taught him was ordained by God was right; all else was false and with it there could be no compromise. Consequently, war, "Papal usurpation," drunkenness, human chattelism, polygamy, the "continental Sabbath," and Puseyism must be combatted.

CHAPTER IX

RAISING THE STANDARD OF CONGREGATIONALISM IN NEW YORK CITY

The influx of New Englanders into New York City in the thirties and forties created a demand for the establishment of Congregational churches in the metropolis. Heretofore, the Plan of Union, in operation between Presbyterians and Congregationalists since 1808, had effectively excluded Congregational societies from New York State and the West. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church struck the first blow in the breakdown of the Plan of Union, when the Old School adherents expelled the New School Presbyterians from the general convention in 1837.¹ The basic reasons for the split were the liberal doctrines of the New School followers and their acceptance of the Plan of Union. The Old School Presbyterians now organized their own Missionary society and repudiated the Plan of Union. The New School still faithfully lived up to its agreement with the Congregationalists.²

The second blow at the Plan of Union was administered by the New England Congregationalists in New York City, who resented the restrictions of an "outmoded" compact. These Congregationalists were men of wealth and influence; and even though the Plan of Union was not formally abrogated, they began to erect Congregational churches in New York and Brooklyn in the middle forties. Among the most famous of these new churches were Plymouth and Pilgrim Churches in Brooklyn and the Broadway Tabernacle and Church of the Puritans in New York City. The founders of Pilgrim Church sought the services of the Reverend George Shepard of Bangor Theological Seminary as their first pastor, offering him a \$2500 salary, a parsonage, and the free education of his children. Shepard was so firmly entrenched at Bangor that he declined to leave his professorship; but he did suggest George Cheever as the most logical candidate.³

Cheever's name had already been prominently mentioned in connection with the project; but another group of influential New Yorkers were even then negotiating for his services as a pastor of

¹ Sweet, *Religions in America*, 378.

² *Ibid.*, 375-379.

³ George Shepard to G. B. C., Bangor, June 10, 1845.

a new Congregational enterprise at Union Square.⁴ For a time there was a spirited rivalry between the two organizations.⁵ Undoubtedly, Cheever would have accepted the Brooklyn pastorate, if a unanimous call had been issued. Because of the opposition of an active minority, Cheever refused the offer. He came to this decision only after lengthy consultation with the Reverend E. N. Kirk of the Mount Vernon Church of Boston and the Reverend George Shepard.⁶ In 1846 the Reverend Richard S. Storrs of Massachusetts was called to Pilgrim Church where he served for over fifty years.

Meantime the Union Square project had prospered. On March 15, 1846, George Cheever commenced preaching in the small chapel of New York University, with the view of establishing a church under the name of Church of the Puritans.⁷ On April 12 an organization meeting was held in the *Dutch Reformed Church*, and sixty members were enrolled in the new society.⁸ At an elaborate ceremony in May, Cheever was officially installed as pastor. The Reverend Dr. Adams of the Mercer Street Church delivered the charge to the pastor, the Reverend Joseph Thompson of the Broadway Tabernacle extended the right hand of fellowship, Professor Shepard delivered the pastor's charge, and Dr. Leonard Bacon of New Haven preached the sermon. Churches from as far away as Springfield and Salem, Massachusetts, were represented. All were happy to welcome the promising society into the fellowship of Congregational churches.⁹

The majority of the backers of the Church of the Puritans were

⁴ The Union Square of 1845 was quite unlike that of 1955. Today, Union Square is recognized as the center of America's radical movement. Here are the headquarters of the Communist and Socialist organizations. Cheap stores and amusement houses line the street. Not so in 1845. Then it was a "boom center" and many an enterprising and wealthy New Yorker was moving into the area. Federal Writers Project of the W. P. A., *New York City Guide* (New York, 1939), 198-201.

⁵ Henry to his mother, New York, October 6, 1845.

⁶ E. N. Kirk to G. B. C., Boston, January 6, 1846; George Shepard to G. B. C., January 12, 1846.

⁷ Jonathan Greenleaf, *A History of the Churches of All Denominations in the City of New York from the First Settlement to the Year, 1846* (New York, 1846), 367-368.

⁸ *Evangelist*, April 16, 1846, 62.

⁹ *Evangelist*, May 21, 1846.

substantial middle class people, doctors, lawyers, teachers, dentists, brokers and merchants. However, there were some especially prominent men such as Seth B. Hunt and Jonathan Hunt, founders of the *Independent*, William Evarts, distinguished lawyer, Henry Hurlbut, the leading American hat manufacturer, George D. Phelps, railroad magnate, several Morgans, and others.¹⁰ One of the city's leading architects, James Renwick, the designer of St. Patrick's Cathedral, was engaged to plan the church building.¹¹ The corner-stone was laid in September, 1846, amid imposing ceremonies. When the beautiful edifice was ready for occupancy in October, 1847, nearly one hundred new members¹² had been added and there were indications of a brilliant future of service to mankind.

When George Cheever relinquished the editorship of the *Evangelist*, he entered whole-heartedly upon the manifold tasks accompanying the firm establishment of the new church. The first ten years of Cheever's pastorate were devoted largely to church work and allied activities. Starting with a nucleus of enthusiastic, prosperous parishioners, the Church of the Puritans was quickly joined by many other people of wealth and position. By 1857 the church membership counted well over three hundred on the active list,¹³ the church and the congregation being separate organizations. The church auditorium, which afforded a comfortable sitting for thirteen hundred, was usually well filled. Under the capable direction of Theodore McNamee of the famous merchandising firm of Bowen and McNamee, the President of the Board of Trustees of Puritan Church, and Deacon O. E. Wood, the church debt of \$15,000 was extinguished by 1853.¹⁴

The Church of the Puritans was not solely interested in preserving a healthy financial condition of its own, but extended a helping hand to its struggling sister churches. At the great Albany

¹⁰ G. P. Williams to G. B. C., New York, January 9, 1847. Contains the names of forty-nine men and one woman who contributed \$1.00 each to make up a New Year's Purse for their pastor.

¹¹ Lossing, *History of New York*, 675.

¹² Church of the Puritans, *A Narrative of Some Recent Occurrences in the Church of the Puritans, New York, with Documents Relating Thereto* (New York, 1857), 23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

conference in 1852, which repudiated the Plan of Union and opened the West to Congregational churches, George Cheever was appointed to the Central Committee in New York to raise \$50,000 for Western churches.¹⁵ In 1855 the Church of the Puritans alone subscribed \$10,000 for domestic and foreign missions.¹⁶ Until 1857 the Church of the Puritans was a wealthy and growing institution, one of the finest church organizations in New York City.¹⁷

To the great satisfaction of all his friends, George Cheever had finally abandoned bachelorhood in the fall of 1845. After his love affair with Mrs. "Florida" White, his name had been prominently linked with that of Miss Kirk, the sister of the Boston pastor. Later he was reported engaged to a Miss Goldsmith, a member of the Allen Street Presbyterian Church. In the fall of 1842 through the machinations of Henry P. Tappan, former professor of moral and intellectual philosophy at New York University, Cheever met Elizabeth Hoppin Wetmore,¹⁸ daughter of a wealthy merchant. Professor Tappan highly recommended her for the position of a clergyman's wife, describing her as "pious, highly educated, amiable, accomplished and pretty. She sings and plays finely and is domestic."¹⁹ In addition she was heiress to a sizeable fortune.

After a courtship of a year they became engaged in the fall of 1843 and were married on November 21, 1845, in New York City.²⁰ Although George's mother had always rebuked him for his failure to obtain a wife, and although Elizabeth Wetmore was an excellent choice, Mrs. Cheever declined to attend the wedding. Really this was no indication of disapproval for she had not attended George's commencement exercises at Bowdoin College. In both cases Mrs. Cheever's excuse was that she disliked meeting so many strangers at one time. Elizabeth Wetmore entered whole-

¹⁵ *Independent*, October 14, 1852, 166.

¹⁶ Church of the Puritans, *Narrative of Recent Occurrences*, 25.

¹⁷ The Reverend Storrs, pastor of Pilgrim Church, reminiscing in 1878, said: "Dr. Cheever's splendid 'Church of the Puritans' stood where Tiffany's magnificent storehouse of riches and art now overlooks Union Square, and was occupied by one of the largest and best congregations in the city. . . ." William H. Ward, *Sixty Years of the Independent* (New York, 1908), 1411.

¹⁸ Henry to his mother, New York, October 11, 1842.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Henry to his mother, New York, November 21, 1845.

heartedly into Cheever's career, and although there were frequent differences of opinion, the marriage was happy and successful.

In the period 1845 to 1850, George Cheever wrote several volumes which attracted favorable attention. Upon his return from Europe he penned an account of his experiences in Switzerland. A vivid description of Swiss scenery, combined with enough moral uplift to satisfy the religious public, insured the successful sale of the book in Great Britain and the United States. The profits were donated to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.²¹

In 1846 Cheever published *A Defense of Capital Punishment*, a reconsideration of his earlier work, augmented by the debates with O'Sullivan. *The Windings of the River of the Water of Life in the Development, Discipline and Fruits of Faith* (1849) was Cheever's next important contribution. An outgrowth of his own religious experiences, it was interesting to the religious readers of 1850, but has no appeal today. Dividing the book into four parts he discussed Christ in the *mind*, the *affections*, the *life*, and the *soul*. Actually it constituted a defense of that school of thought known as "New England Theology" to which Cheever had closely adhered since the Andover days.

In 1849 Cheever published the *Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth in New England in 1620*. Possessing an allegedly original copy of the journal, and employing the abundant material at the library of the New York Historical Society, Cheever wrote his own history of the Pilgrims and their early sufferings. Despite the constant intrusion of religion the book is still readable. The titles of several chapters suffice to indicate the scope of the volume: "The First New England Church," "The First Civil Compact," "The Life, Character and Administration of Governor Bradford," and "First Fast and Thanksgiving." Of course, Cheever lost no opportunity to extol the moral virtues and religious principles of the Pilgrims at the expense of the high-church Episcopalians and the Catholics.²²

The New York Presbyterians resented the invasion of their

²¹ G. B. C. to his mother, New York, June 27, 1845.

²² George B. Cheever, *Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth in New England, in 1620: Reprinted from the Original Volume with Historical and Local Illustrations of Providences, Principles, and Persons*, New York, 1849.

city and state by the Congregationalists in violation of the Plan of Union. Although invited to the ordination services of both George Cheever and Richard Storrs, several leading Presbyterian clergymen refused to attend.²³ Mindful of this hostility a group of prominent Congregational laymen resolved to establish a religious newspaper in the city which would uphold the "right of Congregationalists to remain so beyond the Byram River,"²⁴ the boundary between New York State and Connecticut. The non-extension of slavery in national territories was the second cardinal principle upon which the *Independent* was founded.²⁵ Neither the *Evangelist* nor the *Observer*, hitherto the leading religious periodicals, satisfied both of these requirements since the former was a Presbyterian organ, and the latter was tinged by pro-slavery sentiment.

To lend prestige to the enterprise the most outstanding Congregational clergy of the country were engaged as editors. A triumvirate consisting of Leonard Bacon, Joseph Thompson and Richard Storrs was entrusted with complete formulation of editorial policy without interference from the financial sponsors. Henry Ward Beecher and George Cheever joined the staff as featured correspondents.²⁶ After the appearance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriett Beecher Stowe was also retained as special editor. Under this capable direction the *Independent* soon gained recognition as the most outstanding religious weekly of the age.

Through the columns of this paper,²⁷ Cheever thundered away against the same old evils which he had denounced for twenty years, although with a noticeable change of emphasis. Once he had condemned Unitarianism as the great enemy of orthodoxy, now he pleaded for a united Protestantism, strong and militant, that it might successfully combat Catholicism everywhere. Once he had championed total abstinence and moral suasion at the expense of liquor-distilling deacons; now he upheld prohibition as the only adequate method of liquor control. Once a devotee of

²³ *Independent*, December 21, 1848, 10.

²⁴ Frank L. Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1850-1865* (Cambridge, 1938), II, 368.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Beecher signed his articles with an asterisk and Cheever signed his with a C.

²⁷ Cheever did not join the editorial staff until January, 1851; but from the first issue, December, 1848, his activities were accorded full publicity.

abolitionism, he had retired to the position of a respectable anti-slavery advocate.

After his return from Europe in 1845 Cheever was more than ever alarmed by the aggressiveness of the Catholics. Newman and his followers in England, and Brownson and Hecker in America had gone over to Rome. In Switzerland and Italy the evangelical religions seemed to be losing ground to the Catholic church. To combat this aggressiveness and in an endeavor to unite the various Protestant groups, the Evangelical Alliance was established in London in 1846 at a convention attended by over fifty evangelical sects of Europe and America.²⁸ At the time of organization, Cheever was editor of the *Evangelist* and he furnished its readers with full accounts of the convention. For the moment Cheever was carried away with the idea of a united Protestantism which would evangelize and redeem the world from the darkness and oppression of Rome.²⁹

The years 1847 and 1848 were largely occupied with the endeavors to place the Church of the Puritans upon a firm foundation. Once that was accomplished, Cheever again took up the cudgel in Protestantism's behalf. In December, 1848, the year when Catholic migration from Ireland and Germany to the United States was at flood-tide, an open meeting was held in the Church of the Puritans to bless the departure of the Reverend Alexander King as a missionary to the Emerald Isle.³⁰ Today we marvel at the audacity of such a project; but those men were intensely earnest, and fully expected that their work would be crowned with success. If only the masses could read the truth of the Bible, then the bonds of Rome would be broken. On this occasion, Cheever delivered the principal address. "What an intense hatred has formerly prevailed among Protestant Christians. It is only within a short time that Christian pity for their delusion has begun to take the place of disgust at their cruelty. Now we see multitudes of them converted to the truth, not only here, but in all papal countries."³¹

The tide of success resulting from the Revolutions of 1848

²⁸ Sweet, *Religions in America*, 519.

²⁹ *Evangelist*, July 9, 1846, 110.

³⁰ *Independent*, December 14, 1848, 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*

was still running strong in Italy, where the Pope had been displaced, and in Hungary, where Kossuth was rallying his forces for the proclamation of a free republic. In Germany the liberals were in the ascendancy, and France had proclaimed itself a republic. Cheever rejoiced in all these successes and interpreted them as the dawn of a new era in which the peoples of Europe would forever be emancipated from Popery and its "attendant reaction and darkness."

Alas! the triumphs of liberalism were short-lived. When the Evangelical Alliance held its anniversary in May, 1849, the reactionary elements in Europe were more firmly entrenched than ever. Louis Napoleon was engaged in an Armed Intervention for the purpose of restoring the Pope to his throne in Rome. Delivering the main address at the session of the Evangelical Alliance, Cheever compared it to the Armed Intervention. "Our Alliance is very unlike theirs—an Alliance for the Truth of God, an Alliance for human liberty, an Alliance for freedom of conscience. We war by the Truth; they war with bayonets and cannon. We sound out 14,000 arguments, they sound out 14,000 hired soldiers with powder and shot. We war to free men from hierarchical despotism; they war to support that despotism."³²

Cheever was an eager follower of the career of Louis Kossuth. Though unsuccessful in establishing a republic in Hungary, Kossuth earned the admiration of the American public and in February, 1851, the "spread-eagle" United States Senate officially invited Kossuth to visit America.³³ An American warship was even dispatched to bring him here.

To the majority of Americans, Kossuth was a standard-bearer of the torch of political freedom; to others, including Cheever, he was the advance guard of Protestantism. The Catholic hierarchy and press bitterly resented Kossuth's visit, denouncing him as a "humbug," "one of the most dangerous characters now living."³⁴ Naturally the Protestant press sprang to his defense. Writing in the *Independent*, Cheever remarked: "The coming of the great Hungarian patriot among us will be a true and lasting benefit to our country. We rejoice in such an example, before our young

³² *Independent*, May 17, 1849, 93.

³³ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 330.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 331.

men especially, of the might of principle and conscience above interest and profit, and the glory of a career guided not by expediency but the clear perception of duty. We rejoice in the great sentiments of truth and freedom, which he has uttered with a voice that God in his wonderful providence has inspired with power for the hearts of nations.”³⁵

When Kossuth landed in New York City in December, 1851, he was greeted by a wildly-cheering mob of 200,000.³⁶ Indulging in a spasm of anti-Catholic speeches, he endeared himself to the Protestants. George Cheever drafted a letter to Kossuth from the Congregational ministers of New York City, in which the exile was praised for his addresses, sympathized with for his plans of establishing a “Christian Republic,” and urged to persevere till the final day of triumph.³⁷ As long as Kossuth concentrated on anti-Catholicism, he was favorably regarded, but when he set himself up as another “Citizen Genet” his supporters quickly dropped him. When he left the United States in 1852, after a tour of the country, he was practically friendless. After December, 1851, Cheever made no reference to Kossuth or his cause.

In 1853 when the Catholics of Florence, Italy, were persecuting a Protestant sect of the city, Cheever thundered forth with an article urging lovers of religious liberty to endorse the move that was being made in England, through representatives to the King of Sardinia, to secure more liberal treatment for these harassed Italians.³⁸ Whenever there was opportunity to present the Catholic Church in an unfavorable light, Cheever made use of it.

On March 23, 1853, an ex-priest, Father Alessandro Gavazzi,³⁹ arrived in New York at the invitation of the American and Foreign Christian Union. Cheever was delighted with this exiled agitator who posed not as a protestor against Romanism, but as an annihilator. “We do know that never in the history of our country has a more eloquent and powerful presentation of the true state of the case, as between Romanism and Protestantism, been pre-

³⁵ *Independent*, December 18, 1851.

³⁶ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 330.

³⁷ *Independent*, December 23, 1851.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, February 17, 1853.

³⁹ Gavazzi had participated in the move to free the Papal States from the Pope's domination. Convinced that “Popery and liberalism were incompatible” he renounced his vows and dedicated his life to an exposure of church corruption. Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 301.

sented to a popular assembly, never a more fearless exposure of the iniquity of the Papal system been attempted, and never a more resistless and successful appeal been made.”⁴⁰

Many Protestants lamented the inflammatory nature of Gavazzi's lectures and joined with the Catholics in an attempt to silence the ex-priest. Cheever wasted no sympathy on half-hearted Protestants, and lashed out against them with a torrent of abuse. Horace Greeley, who advised Gavazzi to soft-pedal his statements, reaped Cheever's animosity and was promptly assailed.⁴¹

Gavazzi's discourses were calculated to incite mob action against the Catholics. Bedini, the “bloody butcher of Bologna,” was the particular object of Gavazzi's invective. When Bedini reached America in 1854, he was greeted by riots and mobs of such magnitude that his tour developed into a nightmare. In many cities his lectures were cancelled and he was finally smuggled out of the country to preserve his life.⁴²

George Cheever had implicit faith in Gavazzi's integrity and believed the worst which the ex-monk revealed concerning Catholicism. Cheever expected a great overturn in the religious affiliations of intelligent people would accompany Gavazzi's “exposures.”⁴³ When Gavazzi attempted to tour French Canada, he was greeted by Catholic mobs, but escaped death in a miraculous fashion. Cheever afforded much publicity to this event; and joined other “Pope-baiters” in inviting Gavazzi to New York City—despite repeated threats of violence.

Throughout 1853, Cheever harangued against the Catholics. Many articles were devoted solely to a comparison of the basic principles of Catholicism and Protestantism. The “continental Sabbath,” which seemed to be gaining popularity in America, particularly distressed him. He repeatedly pointed out that in “Roman Catholic countries the Sabbath is a day of sport and recreation, a day for theatrical amusements, martial reviews, bull fights, revolutions, spectacles, fireworks, rejoicings.”⁴⁴ To Cheever,

⁴⁰ *Independent*, March 31, 1853.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 302-303.

⁴³ Cheever drew up a statement of appreciation for Gavazzi's services which accompanied a \$1000 gift appropriately presented at a public demonstration in May. *Independent*, May 19, 1853.

⁴⁴ *Independent*, July 28, 1853, 118.

nothing approached the purity of the old-time New England Sabbath.

Cheever apparently took no notice of John S. Orr, the "Angel Gabriel," who toured the country urging violent action against the Catholics. The similar activities of Daniel Parsons were sympathetically viewed by Cheever. Parsons, an itinerant street-preacher, attracted immense crowds on New York City streets by his anti-Catholic tirades. Finally on December 10, when a crowd of ten thousand greeted him, the police interrupted his sermon to place him in protective custody. At once the intolerant mob-spirit broke into action. The mayor's house was besieged. This action so confounded the mayor that he ordered Parsons' immediate release. This affair gave Cheever a chance to warn liberty-loving citizens against the loss of their rights at the hands of "Papal police" directed by the Catholic Church.⁴⁵

In 1854 Cheever altered his stand a trifle in that he was now chiefly disturbed by the increasing frequency with which Bible-teaching⁴⁶ was being dropped from the school curriculum. Cheever blamed the Catholics for this trend in education. Cheever pointed out that Catholics constituted a minority of the population, and that it was illogical and undemocratic to permit minority rule. "If the Bible be excluded from the Public Schools, the affections and support of the churches will inevitably be withdrawn from them; and the effort will be made, and by the divine blessing it will be successful, to provide a system of education in which the knowledge of the Word of God shall be as free and as freely taught, as other knowledge. *This is the vital question of our day.*"⁴⁷

For many months this was Cheever's principal theme. His chief contention was that America's continued prosperity depended upon the retention of Bible training in the public schools. Without this overtone, public education would become a process of "leveling down rather than up." This was the high-water mark of political Know-Nothingism. Cheever evidently did not officially attach himself to the movement; but he must have rejoiced in its triumphs, since his goals were almost identical with those of political nativism. As the slavery controversy became more acute,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, December 15, 1853, 198.

⁴⁶ In 1854 Cheever published a work entitled *The Right of the Bible in Our Public Schools*.

⁴⁷ *Independent*, January 19, 1854, 25.

Cheever's interest in the Protestant Crusade dwindled. His attention, like that of other prominent anti-Catholics, was increasingly drawn to the "irrepressible conflict."

Since college days, George Cheever had been an inveterate champion of the Puritan Sabbath. From boyhood, it was a standing rule of the Cheevers that the Sabbath was consecrated to God, and any wordly act, as innocent as letter-writing, was strictly taboo. The growth of the "continental Sabbath" in America had inspired many violent outbursts. The advent of Sunday railroad trains was even more distressing to Cheever. He could not say enough against this "malicious" practice. To the directors of the Hudson River Railroad he announced: "But there is an end. And when the end cometh, most likely the tables will be turned, and while the *retribution* will be endured in *person*, all that those men who for gain have broken God's laws, shall know about the enjoyment of celestial things, will be by proxy."⁴⁸

Cheever's main argument was that the operation of Sunday trains was a direct violation of God's commandment regarding the holiness of the Sabbath. "Certainly a Sabbath-breaking railroad is the nearest realization of such an imagined causeway to hell that we can ever expect to behold upon this globe."⁴⁹ On another occasion Cheever charged that the railroads were leading tens of thousands into eternal damnation by tempting them to desecrate the Sabbath. In this crusade Cheever enjoyed the enthusiastic support of Seth B. Hunt, one of his most influential parishioners.⁵⁰

Cheever called for united church action against the railroad, despite the fact that many of his leading church members were railroad directors. When James Boorman resigned as President of the Board of Directors of the Hudson River Railroad in 1852, because of a disapproval of Sunday trains but convinced that Sunday operation was a public necessity, Cheever charged Boorman with inconsistency; and predicted that such a compromising individual would find hell a very hot place.⁵¹ When the Long Island Railroad, in July, 1853, resolved to follow the example of the Hudson River line, Cheever shouted: "The object of the Sunday trains will be to provide one more outlet for pouring forth the

⁴⁸ *Independent*, June 3, 1853.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Seth B. Hunt to G. B. C., Bennington, Vermont, July 12, 1853.

⁵¹ *Independent*, June 24, 1852.

Sabbath-breaking population of a large city, with all its noise and rowdyism, upon the villages and retreats hitherto quiet in the country." ⁵²

Cheever was never reconciled to Sunday trains. For nearly another decade he preached against the practice. For himself, he preferred to remain overnight in some dingy country-inn, rather than violate a Puritanical principle. What would he think, if he could observe the motor traffic on the Portland-Boston highway on the Labor Day week-end?

Cheever became a national figure in the lyceum world soon after 1850. Already well-known around New York City and throughout New England, he now invaded new fields. In early 1850 he toured western New York, Rochester, Buffalo, Niagara, and Lockport. So successful were his lectures that he was invited back for many years. In 1851-1852 a partial list of engagements included the Newark Library Association, the literary societies of Wesleyan University, a temperance society in New York City, a lyceum circuit in Greater Boston, undergraduate societies at Rochester University, Andover Seminary, Pennsylvania College, Union Theological, and Bangor Theological Seminaries.

Each year the number of new requests for lecture appearances mounted. Until 1857, Cheever was restricted by his pastoral duties; and his lecture tours were necessarily short and infrequent. After 1857 he toured, extensively, both east and west, for long periods of time. Before 1857 his themes were usually religion, literature, temperance, and Sabbath desecration; after the Dred Scot decision, slavery was his staple.

As minister of a leading Congregational church of America, as special correspondent of the country's leading religious weekly, and as lyceum lecturer, Cheever was a familiar figure to the religious public of his day. Preaching, writing, and lecturing on controversial subjects were not designed to win the one hundred per cent approval of the public. As long as he was wrapped up in moral or religious problems, and as long as he preached abstractly concerning slavery, he enjoyed the confidence of his parishioners. When the state of the country impelled Cheever to emerge again as an abolitionist, he found himself in embarrassing circumstances.

⁵² *Ibid.*, July 7, 1853.

CHAPTER X

THE AWAKENING CONSCIENCE

The debates over the Compromise of 1850, particularly Southern opposition to California's free status and Southern championship of a more stringent Fugitive Slave Law, greatly disturbed Cheever's peace of mind. Long convinced of slavery's immorality, he had been prevented from becoming an outspoken abolitionist by his own opposition to non-Christian demagogues posing as reformers, by his disapproval of women as co-laborers, and by the restraining influence of his wealthy congregation. Many of Cheever's parishioners were members of rich merchant houses with extensive connections in the South. These men would not tolerate abolitionist preaching by their own pastor. Yet Cheever could not hold his tongue forever, and beginning in 1850 he began to publicly attack slavery—mildly at first, then with increasing vigor.

Daniel Webster's Seventh of March Speech troubled the conscience of many a northern Whig. When Webster toured the country recruiting support for the Compromise of 1850 as the final solution of the slavery question, Cheever broke his silence. Webster was one of Cheever's popular heroes;¹ but Webster was also a supporter of the new Fugitive Slave Law, which Cheever considered to be a complete miscarriage of justice, since it denied the captured fugitive the right of jury trial. Cheever also entertained well-fixed views of the American Constitution:

If there ever was political madness, it is displayed this winter in the Senate of the United States, when it has been averred that the obligation of obedience to the Constitution is paramount to every other obligation. The obligation of obedience to that Constitution derives its whole force from the higher obligations of obedience to the law of God; and if in any one particular it should be found to be opposed to the law of God²

¹ Cheever preached a sermon on the death of Webster: "What a solemn and impressive scene was that of his dying hours; I begin to think he has been infamously vilified and slandered and at any rate he was the greatest man in intellect ever born on this continent and perhaps the greatest in the world. . . . What beautiful and touching letters have come to light revealing more of the man within the man than I ever before saw. . . ." G. B. C. to his mother, New York, November 2, 1852.

² *Independent*, June 21, 1850, 101.

then citizens should disobey it. This doctrine closely resembled personal nullification, and if followed by every individual would have resulted in utter chaos. Yet Cheever was consistent in his argument. To him the Word of God was the world's highest law, and any man-made Constitution, however perfect, was to be violated if in opposition to Bible truth.

Cheever disagreed radically with Daniel Webster, when the latter asserted that "religion" was an "excellent thing in every matter except in politics—there it seems to make men mad." Cheever defended religion in politics as the only method by which America could shield herself from the "wrath of an angry God." He protested against measures which seemed to be making the Constitution the "cat's paw" of the Southern slavocracy.³

In October, 1850, Dr. Cheever and George D. Phelps exchanged verbal blows at a Sunday evening meeting of the Church of the Puritans. The next day Phelps apologized for his own harsh remarks, promising to refrain from any public censure of his pastor.⁴ Phelps, nevertheless, insisted that the "gag-rule" in effect against abolitionism in New England Congregational churches should be enforced in the New York churches.⁵

In December, Cheever was reproached by his old friend, Nehemiah Adams,⁶ for unguarded references to "time-serving ministers of religion." "Do you not think it possible that some of your Brethren may adopt sentiments contrary to your own and still be as *honest, upright, and conscientious* as yourself? . . . You think and reason, in a particular way, in your interpretations of scripture. Another thinks and reasons in a different way, in reference to the same subject. What is there in this process by which your conclusion is reached which authorizes you, from the pulpit, to call your brother, differing from you, a 'time serving minister of religion?' " ⁷

On February 18, 1851, Frederic Wilkins (Shadrach), an

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ George D. Phelps to G. B. C., New York, October 31, 1850.

⁵ George D. Phelps to the Deacons and Prudential Committee of the Church of the Puritans, New York, December 27, 1855.

⁶ Adams had been informed by one of Cheever's prominent parishioners that Cheever had specifically referred to him as a pro-slavery preacher. Nehemiah Adams to G. B. C., Boston, December 25, 1850.

⁷ *Ibid.*

escaped fugitive, was rescued from the Boston Court House by a band of his negro friends who hustled him to western Massachusetts, Vermont, and Canada. This was a flagrant violation of the fugitive slave law; and the government, at President Fillmore's direction, instituted proceedings against all those who had aided in the escape. Among those indicted were Lewis Hayden, a negro parishioner of Theodore Parker, and wealthy Elizur Wright. Judge Sprague, the presiding jurist, upheld the constitutionality of the new Fugitive Slave Law, and asked the jury for a conviction. Because one of the jurymen had driven Shadrach from Concord to Leominster, the jury could not agree.⁸ George Cheever was jubilant. Sprague, the same man who had encouraged Cheever's indictment of Jackson's Indian policy, and who had defended Cheever against the libel charge of Deacon Stone, now found himself the object of Cheever's ridicule. Cheever charged Peleg Sprague with the attempted enforcement of a law which the Judge's conscience must tell him was an unrighteous enactment. Cheever's dictum was, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."⁹ For weeks Cheever's editorials were primarily devoted to a discussion of right above might and justice above power.

The famous "Jerry Rescue" took place at Syracuse in October, 1851; but Cheever did not comment editorially, although he must have been pleased by the success of the affair. Despite these exceptional victories by anti-slavery sympathizers, the Fugitive Slave Law generally was rigidly enforced. Cheever's despair was reflected in a private communication: "Alas! What is before our country. Who can tell. Perhaps God is going to leave us as the most terrible and disastrous demonstration of pride, selfishness, avarice and oppression, and the ruinous consequences of these vices that the world ever saw. . . . Our slavemongers and slave politicians and editors and merchants also, have all but one gospel. . . . Seek ye first the *kingdom of man* and his righteousness and all things else shall be added unto you. . . ." ¹⁰

In August, General Narciso Lopez, Venezuelan adventurer, at the head of a company of five hundred, including representatives of the South's finest families, descended upon Cuba for his third

⁸ Henry S. Commager, *Theodore Parker* (Boston, 1936), 219-220.

⁹ *Independent*, March 27, 1851.

¹⁰ G. B. C. to his mother, Henderson, New York, September 5, 1851.

filibustering expedition. Overpowered by the Spanish army, Lopez and fifty followers were executed. Over a hundred others were imprisoned. At once there arose an indignant outcry from the South which had been casting covetous eyes on Cuba. Mass meetings were held in Southern cities, Spanish consulates were sacked, and the Spanish flag insulted.¹¹ Even in Philadelphia a series of resolutions were adopted advising the President that a special envoy be dispatched to Spain with sufficient naval escort to demand either the withdrawal of Spanish forces from Cuba or the grant of home rule.¹² Cheever cried out: "Choice of alternatives! Shades of Hector and Achilles. What mighty reaches of patriotism and bravery, before unheard of! The thing is absolutely ludicrous. These Bombastic Furiosos in Philadelphia and New York are really outheroing the maddest spirits of the French revolution. With a brigandism and atrocity such as Burke's Letter on a Regicide Peace might fitly characterize they utter, in the sacred name of liberty, doctrines of the most infamous piracy, doctrines and principles, than which the yells of a Parisian populace never broached anything more abominable."¹³ As for the filibusterers, Cheever wasted no sympathy on them, feeling that they got just what they deserved.

Kossuth, Sabbath-breaking railroads, and Gavazzi absorbed Cheever's attentions until Stephen A. Douglas introduced a bill in 1853 for the organization of Nebraska territory.¹⁴ Although this particular measure contained no indication of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and though the bill failed to pass the Senate, Cheever assailed it as a slave conspiracy. President Francis Wayland of Brown University heartily commended Cheever's stand and joined Cheever in predicting that God would soon scourge the land as retribution for the iniquities of the leaders. Wayland was seriously disturbed by the apathy of the clergy regarding slavery; and urged Cheever to labor diligently to arouse his fellow ministers from their lethargy to a clear conception of their anti-slavery duty.¹⁵

¹¹ R. G. Caldwell, *The Lopez Expeditions to Cuba* (Princeton, 1915), 114-115.

¹² *Independent*, October 2, 1851, 162.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Theodore C. Smith, *Parties and Slavery 1850-1859* (New York, 1906), 95.

¹⁵ Francis Wayland to G. B. C., Providence, March 6, 1853.

In January, 1854, a new Nebraska bill was introduced with the proviso that a territory could enter the Union "with or without slavery."¹⁶ From January to May 30, when the bill became a law, there was a bitter Congressional struggle between the pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions. In the country at large the press voiced its sentiments, largely on a sectional basis. With others, Cheever decried this overthrow of a solemn and time-honored compromise between the states. He charged that the bill had passed Congress "only by the meanest subterfuge and trickery."¹⁷ He even went so far as to advocate armed resistance to the enforcement of the new statute: "Where right is against might, if arms be put in possession of right, . . . the arms themselves become a moral power, while all the array of military force and violence on the other side is an immoral power."¹⁸

A few days after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska act, Anthony Burns, a fugitive slave, was seized in Boston. The sessions of the Boston anniversaries were in full progress. The leading abolitionists were all in town. Mass meetings were held in Faneuil Hall, the Court House was sacked, and the militia, at Pierce's direction, was called out to preserve order. Despite popular sympathy, Burns was returned to slavery.¹⁹ Cheever added his wail of anguish to that of Theodore Parker, T. W. Higginson, S. J. May, Garrison, Phillips, and others. Cheever boldly announced that the Boston populace should have shed its blood for its liberties. He scolded the Massachusetts governor because he obeyed the president's injunction to "incur any expense deemed necessary to insure the execution of the law."²⁰ He pronounced his former college-mate, Franklin Pierce, unfit to perform the presidential duties because he enforced laws which his New England background must tell him were immoral.²¹

Cheever endorsed certain measures which the Rhode Island legislature was considering: the prohibition of State jails, court-houses, and public buildings for the detention of fugitives; punishment for state officers who in any way aided in the detention of

¹⁶ Smith, *Parties and Slavery*, 95.

¹⁷ *Independent*, June 8, 1854, 177.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Commager, *Theodore Parker*, 232-240.

²⁰ *Independent*, June 8, 1854, 177.

²¹ *Ibid.*

fugitives; and disqualification for public office of any person who helped capture a fugitive.²² When Massachusetts enacted a Personal Liberty law Cheever was elated, and called upon other States to follow its example.²³

When Joseph K. Hayes resigned his office of police captain in Boston rather than participate in the execution of the "infamous" Fugitive Slave Law, Cheever applauded the action and recommended similar action to conscientious officials. "If all men placed the authority of conscience and of God superior to man's authority there would be no more despotism, no more legalized oppression, no more vast and sweeping injustice on earth."²⁴

Cheever congratulated the free-soil Congressmen, especially Charles Sumner, who had labored against the Kansas-Nebraska bill.²⁵ Keeping up a steady fire against unrighteous law, Cheever rejoiced whenever a judge pronounced the Fugitive Slave law unconstitutional or a slave escaped across the border to Canada.

In the summer of 1854 the politicians attempted to soft-pedal the sectional strife in the interests of party unity. Cheever came forth with an editorial, "If You Would Be True, Beware of Political Expediency," predicting that the Whig party would sink as a political organization "if it continues to make opposition to the bugbear of abolitionism one of its normal principles. The Whig party must come heartily into opposition to slavery, or the people will disavow and abandon" it.²⁶

In the late fall of 1854 Cheever was still hammering away at Judges who upheld the Fugitive Slave law. "Our judges instead of administering justice, are poisoning the fountains of public morality and religion, when they tell men that conscience is to be sacrificed to law."²⁷ Cheever was referring particularly to Judge Ebenezer Hoar, who maintained that once the Supreme Court had ruled an act of Congress constitutional, the people must uphold the statute even if it was unethical.

The so-called Ostend Manifesto was drawn up in October, 1854, by the American ministers, Buchanan, Mason, and Soule,

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, May 31, 1855.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, June 22, 1854, 193.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, June 29, 1854, 201.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, August 10, 1854, 248.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, December 14, 1854, 393.

with Secretary of State, Marcy, an absent but interested partner. Although the opposition press was unacquainted with the document's details, it was cognizant of the general principles; and opened fire on the administration for its covetousness and avarice. Excitement mounted, and Congress was finally impelled in March, 1855, to publish certain relevant documents.²⁸ At once the anti-administration papers and the anti-slavery journals renewed their outbursts. Cheever's most violent denunciation was entitled *Ahab in Naboth's Vineyard* with the American ministers playing the role of *Jezebel*, Pierce as *Ahab*, and Spain as innocent *Naboth*.²⁹

On July 18, 1855, Passamore Williamson, secretary of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, aided by a small band of negroes, boarded a ship in Philadelphia harbor on which the United States minister to Nicaragua, John H. Wheeler, and three negroes were quartered.³⁰ The slaves were abducted, set on Pennsylvania soil, and declared to be free men. Wheeler petitioned for a writ of habeas corpus to force Williamson to produce the slaves. Williamson protested the writ, asserting that as leader of the filibustering expedition, he had never actually been in possession of the negroes. Judge Kane was indignant, and committed Williamson to jail for contempt of court. Williamson, through a writ of *habeas corpus*, immediately petitioned the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania for release. Jeremiah Black, the Pennsylvania Chief Justice, handed down a decision that was sound law,³¹ but entirely unacceptable to anti-slavery sympathizers. In common with the free-soil and abolition press, Cheever denounced the decision. Black's dictum that "injustice itself must be defended and sustained, in order not to impair the constitutional vigor of the general government" was especially odious to one who held that all human law must be in harmony with divine decrees.³² Cheever fearlessly taunted Kane and Black for their apparent concern for their political future as Democrats. For legalistic arguments with which to

²⁸ Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York, 1940), 315-316.

²⁹ *Independent*, April 5, 1855, 105.

³⁰ William N. Brigance, *Jeremiah S. Black* (Philadelphia, 1934), 38.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

³² *Independent*, August 30, 1855, 273; September 13, 289; September 20, 297; October 25, 337; November 8, 353.

bolster his attack, Cheever turned to the dissenting opinion of Justice Knox.

For the October, 1855, and January, 1856, issues of the *Biblical Repository*, Cheever more fully developed his anti-slavery ideas. Positive that slavery was a sin in the eyes of God, Cheever maintained that all ministers of the true gospel were bound to proclaim the wickedness of slavery from their pulpits. In an era when the social gospel was unknown and political preaching was unpopular, this would have been ministerial suicide for the majority of preachers. Even in Cheever's liberal-thinking church, anti-slavery agitation involved the pastor in increasingly embarrassing intra-church quarrels.

George D. Phelps, wealthy parishioner and railroad magnate, with whom the Cheevers had been very intimate, would not accept Cheever's political preaching. After Phelps had stalked from the church during Cheever's Thanksgiving sermon, 1855, Cheever administered a public rebuke to his former friend. At once a struggle developed between the followers of Phelps and Cheever; but Phelps was unwilling to foment a prolonged struggle, and quietly withdrew from the Church of the Puritans.³⁴ Though this development was distressing, Cheever, undaunted, kept on with his political gospel.

Cheever had closely followed the bloody contest between Free-Soilers and Southerners in Kansas. Believing that Kansas rightfully belonged to the North, he excused any indiscretions of Northerners in Kansas. Fraudulent elections and border ruffianism were blamed on Southerners. Cheever often compared the Kansas situation to that of France just before Louis Napoleon's *coup d'etat* in 1852, alleging that if the American government possessed a strong army "the slavocracy would be so firmly entrenched that it could not be ousted without revolution."³⁵ Cheever evidently did

³³ G. B. C. to O. E. Wood, New York, May 16, 1855.

³⁴ George D. Phelps to Deacons and Prudential Committee of the Church of the Puritans, New York, December 27, 1855. Earlier in the year (May) Cheever had alienated Deacon O. E. Wood, hitherto one of the minister's staunchest supporters, when he used, at a regular Communion service, the death-bed scene of Mrs. Wood as an illustration of the beauty and glory of the Christian life. G. B. C. to O. E. Wood, New York, May 16, 1855.

³⁵ *Independent*, April 3, 1856, 105.

not take an active part in the promotion of the Emigrant Aid Society, although many of his most intimate friends were deeply involved.³⁶ That he sympathized with the movement cannot be doubted.

In response to a plea from Lewis Tappan, Cheever trained his guns upon the American Tract Society. Although several of the major Protestant denominations were already hopelessly split by the slavery question, the American Tract Society still pursued a middle-of-the-road course, thereby enabling it to distribute tracts both north and south. Several of the most active and wealthiest members of the Church of the Puritans were supporters of the Tract Society. Though Cheever had frequently protested to members of his own family concerning the pusillanimous policy of the Tract Society,³⁷ he had hesitated to voice his sentiments publicly. Now he threw caution aside and fearlessly reproached the Society for its failure to denounce slavery as a sin in the same language with which it attacked drunkenness, lying, and gambling.³⁸

Cheever paid dearly for this explosive tirade. A wave of discontent swept through the Church on Union Square. Howard Crosby, Professor at New York University, later its Chancellor and a distinguished Presbyterian clergyman, immediately resigned as teacher of the Young Men's Bible Class, and asked for letters of dismissal.³⁹ Others expressed a similar wish. Edward Gilbert, a prominent lawyer and devoted follower of Cheever, commented on the dissension: "There is a cold and unsympathetic atmosphere about our congregation. Treason and insurrection in the camp seems to have stricken many with panic and suggested suspicions of the validity of the cause in which they are listed. This state of things is of course inevitable, and just as inevitable it is that when this exists no true *militant* spirit can prevail. Many a stirring appeal will have to be made and many a bugle note rung before the old tone of sentiment will return."⁴⁰

Cheever did not retreat. When Sumner was struck down by Preston Brooks in the Senate, Cheever, like most other Northern

³⁶ Richard Waters, O. E. Wood, and Thaddeus Hyatt.

³⁷ G. B. C. to his mother, Henderson, New York, September 5, 1851.

³⁸ *Independent*, April 10, 1856, 112.

³⁹ Howard Crosby to G. B. C., New York, March 25, 1856, May 14, 1856.

⁴⁰ Edward Gilbert to G. B. C., New York, May 26, 1856.

ers, regarded it as a personal affront. "A more aggravated, causeless, cowardly outrage could not be imagined. A violation both of criminal and civil law, both of general and special law for the protection of life and freedom, a murderous violation, public, daring, defying of all decency and justice in its essence, yet skulking, stealthy, dastardly in its manner; such a violation called for instant, emphatic retribution."⁴¹ Cheever insisted that if a Northerner had perpetrated a similar outrage on the person of a Southern leader, Pierce and his "toadies" would have moved heaven and earth to secure a conviction.⁴²

Cheever pronounced God's curse upon Pierce and promised him a very warm reception in Hell for his conspiracy against freedom, the "Kansas fraud," and for generally countenancing the "Southside view of slavery."⁴³ When Pierce ordered United States troops into Kansas to uphold the decrees of a pro-Southern legislature, Cheever represented this move as "the step most dangerous to the Constitution of the country and the liberties of the people, ever taken."⁴⁴

In the feverish campaign of 1856, Cheever emphatically supported Fremont's candidacy. The Democratic nominee, James Buchanan, had been connected with the notorious Ostend Manifesto, and was backed by the Southern slavocracy. Hence he was unacceptable to Cheever. Millard Fillmore, campaigning on the standard of Know-Nothingism, had an equally poor record on the slavery question. Much as Cheever might have approved Fillmore's Protestantism, slavery was now more important.

Cheever felt that the Kansas policy of President Pierce and Jefferson Davis rendered the election of 1856 the most momentous in American history.⁴⁵ The issue was clearcut: "If the people do not put this administration out of power, and inaugurate as President a candidate for freedom and justice, they certainly and deliberately sanction all of these iniquitous measures, principles, and precedents, themselves, and cut the throats of their own liberties."⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Independent*, June 5, 1856, 177.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, June 19, 1856, 193.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, September 4, 1856, 281.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, September 25, 1856, 305.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

On one occasion Cheever even called for a public concert of prayer in behalf of "The Pathfinder's" aspirations.

While Cheever was being deserted by some of his own flock because of his outspokenness on slavery, the radical abolitionists, anxious to lure him into the ranks of the American Anti-Slavery Society, were taunting him for his inconsistencies. Parker Pillsbury, a so-called "infidel" abolitionist, of Concord, New Hampshire, was elated by one of Cheever's Sunday evening discourses: "Such a testimony as was that, my ears have a thousand times ached to hear from men of your position and eminence ever since my warfare with oppression commenced."⁴⁷ Assuring Cheever that slavery was the awful sin which Cheever depicted it to be, Pillsbury challenged the minister to explain his continued fellowship with churches and societies that sanctioned slavery.⁴⁸ Pillsbury specifically referred to the American Tract Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Much as Cheever might have disliked the slavery policy of these two organizations, he was as yet unprepared for an all-out fight with his own congregation, or the regular editors of the *Independent*.

In January, 1857, Cheever was stirred by an attempt to muzzle the Brooklyn Young Men's Christian Association when this organization was discussing anti-slavery resolutions. Cheever's conception of the Y. M. C. A. was a society of alert young men, vigorous, fearless defenders of their country's freedom. "When young men set up as conservatives it is something like children putting on the wigs of their grandfathers, and riding a-straddle their canes."⁴⁹ Again he said: "The world has a right to look to the Y. M. C. A.'s for examples of nobleness, manliness, independence, freedom, fearlessness, and generosity of spirit. If not, if they undertake to constitute merely a manufactory of moral cream freezers . . . they had better emigrate in a body to the University of South Carolina, and take charge of the classes in moral philosophy once under the care of Professor Hedrick. . . ."⁵⁰ Howard Crosby introduced a resolution at a subsequent Y. M. C. A.

⁴⁷ Parker Pillsbury to G. B. C., Concord, October 21, 1856.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Independent*, January 15, 1857, 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, January 22, 1857, 1.

meeting to the effect that the society's principal purpose was the promotion of evangelical religion, and that slavery was an incidental and improper subject of discussion.⁵¹ Henry Ward Beecher, an anti-slavery preacher, but not of as radical temperament as Cheever, advised his colleague to forget the Y. M. C. A. and slavery.⁵² Cheever indignantly refused to listen. For weeks the conflict between Crosby and Cheever raged in the columns of the *Independent*. In this instance there was an honest but irreconcilable difference of opinion. Crosby sincerely regarded slavery as "social suicide and shameless sin"; but felt that anti-slavery resolutions by religious societies, or their affiliates, only aggravated the problem, rather than solved it. Polite as Crosby was, and polite as Cheever tried to be, the latter simply could not tolerate any other viewpoint than his own upon slavery.

From 1850 to 1856 Cheever was progressively outspoken on slavery. At first, very careful lest he offend those parishioners who were apathetic or mildly anti-slavery, he finally threw aside caution in the heat of events in 1855-1856. George D. Phelps, Howard Crosby and others immediately severed all connections with the Church of the Puritans to join churches where straight religion was the rule rather than the exception. Others, including Deacon O. E. Wood and millionaire Henry A. Hurlbut, chose to remain within the Church, hoping to silence or oust their pastor. These opponents saw little distinction between Cheever's viewpoint and that of the radical abolitionists, Garrison, Phillips and Pillsbury, although neither Cheever nor the Abolition Society admitted any connection. The composite effect of Cheever's attacks on the American Tract Society and the Y. M. C. A., his support of civil strife in Kansas, his championship of Fremont, and his denunciations of slave-holders as criminals was the deepening of existing wounds and the setting in motion the train of events which rent asunder the powerful Church of the Puritans.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, February 26, 1857, 2-3.

⁵² Henry W. Beecher to G. B. C., Brooklyn, February 16, 1857.

CHAPTER XI

THE ISAIAH OF THE ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT

On March 6, 1857, two days after the inauguration of James Buchanan, Chief Justice Taney read his famous opinion on the Dred Scott case. He upheld the contention that Scott, a negro born in a state of slavery, never could become an American citizen. Since Scott was not a citizen, he had no right to sue in an American court; therefore the United States Circuit Court never should have exercised jurisdiction in the case. Nevertheless, Taney proceeded to an examination of the Lower Court's decision, finally concluding that Congress was debarred by the 5th Amendment from excluding slavery in portions of the Louisiana Purchase. Actually neither of these two points was good constitutional law. For years negroes had been treated in Northern states as citizens even though they did not vote. As to slaves being common-law property under the 5th Amendment, if such had ever been the case, the decision of Lord Mansfield in the *Sommersett* case (1772) had disposed of that effectively. All of these points were carefully covered in Judge Curtis' vigorous dissenting opinion.¹

If Taney expected by this decision to take the wind out of the abolitionists' sails, his hopes backfired. That the Court even considered the constitutionality of the "sacred" Missouri Compromise angered the free-soilers. Nine separate opinions greatly weakened the effectiveness of Taney's arguments. Curtis' opinion, in many quarters, was regarded as a perfect refutation of the Chief Justice's contentions, and was widely circulated. The general result of the decision was heightened sectional feelings, as Southerners sprang to the defense of a Court which guaranteed them slavery in territorial possessions, and Northerners attacked the Court as a tool of slave-holders and sin.

George Cheever was in the van of those who denounced the Court's decision. For four successive Sabbath evenings Cheever harangued to audiences that jammed every available inch of the Church of the Puritans, even overflowing into the streets. Turning the full power of his bitterest sarcasm upon the Chief Justice, Cheever unmercifully abused Roger B. Taney. He charged that

¹ Swisher, Carl B., *Roger B. Taney* (New York, 1935), 495-522; Homer C. Hockett, *The Constitutional History of the United States* (New York, 1939), 240-249.

the Dred Scott decision was a "deliberate falsification of the Constitution and of history." He even insinuated that since Taney was a Catholic, it might be a Papal conspiracy to steal the people's liberties. Taney was declared to have set aside the Declaration of Independence, whose authors had never intended to exclude black men from its blessings. Cheever would not accept the dictum that negroes were chattel, and indiscriminately tossed around the phrase, "negroes have no rights which white men are bound to respect." "Never," declared Cheever, was a "more atrocious, wholesale wickedness perpetrated upon the bench of justice than this. . . . Year after year comes a new, mightier, more daring assault against justice and liberty."²

In his second address Cheever advanced the dictum, "the moment the Supreme Judicial Court becomes a court of injustice, a court to carry schemes of oppression against classes of men, by forced construction of the Constitution, that moment its claim to obedience ceases."³ If all Northerners had taken Cheever's viewpoint, the Civil War might have occurred four years early.

Of course, Cheever was not alone in ridiculing the Chief Justice and his celebrated opinion. Though thousands all over the North denounced the decision, no speeches were more radical than Cheever's. None received more favorable or unfavorable publicity. The *New York Herald*, the *Tribune*, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, and the religious press carried full accounts. The *New York Herald*, April 9, 1857, devoted its entire first page to the text of Cheever's fourth discourse, under the caption, "*Incitement to Revolution: Religious Onslaught on the Government and Supreme Court of the United States; Resistance to Tyrants Obedience to God; Maledictions against Unjust Judges in General and Chief Justice Taney and Associates in Particular.*"

Cheever's text was Paul's famous statement, "The powers that be are ordained of God," which he had been challenged to discuss.⁴ The core of his discourse was that "the nullification of unrighteous law by entire and absolute refusal to obey it, is one mode of true religious obedience to the powers that be." James Gordon Bennett

² *Independent*, March 19, 1857, 1.

³ *Ibid.*, March 26, 1857, 1.

⁴ *New York Herald*, April 9, 1857.

called it "one of the most remarkable political discourses that has ever emanated from the pulpit in this city, where the preacher did not belong to the ultra rabid class of fanatics." Bennett described the tremendous audiences to which Cheever lectured as "representing the most intelligent, enlightened and conservative classes of the community." Bennett was alarmed lest the New England clergymen would take up the cause pleaded by Cheever, thereby fomenting utter confusion. "It is time, therefore, that these religious fire-brands should be rebuked by the sensible conservative men of the country. Their aim is to upset our present form of government, to overthrow our representative and judicial systems, and to establish in their stead a theocracy . . . they must be rebuked and put down. If not we will have four years of dissension and agitation, to end, not improbably, in a terrible political revolution in 1860."⁵

Horace Greeley, who hated the Dred Scott decision as heartily as did Cheever, defended the minister, asserting that passive obedience to law was not, and never would be the foundation of American government.⁶ The New York *Observer*, a pro-slavery organ, assailed Cheever and Gerrit Smith as dangerous fanatics who deserved to be muzzled. "These are not the representative men of our age. They are wild with a fanaticism of liberty: slaves to an *idea* that defies God, and the Bible, and the Constitution, and the right of conscience."⁷

The *Freeman's Journal*,⁸ the leading Catholic organ, welcomed an opportunity to even scores with Cheever. "Sermons against the United States Government have become now a staple production of the Protestant pulpit. . . . By all means, let this class of persons keep on at their vocation. There is no surer way to hasten the total ruin of Protestantism in the country."⁹ The stalwart editors of the *Independent*¹⁰ rose to defend Cheever from the vilifications of the *Observer* and the *Freeman's Journal*. The *Con-*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶ New York *Tribune*, April 10, 1857, 4.

⁷ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 18, 1857, 48.

⁸ The *Observer* was terribly upset because the *Freeman's Journal* treated Cheever's article as typical of Protestant reaction to the Dred Scott Decision. Many Southern papers copied Cheever's addresses as the staple production of northern ministers.

⁹ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 18, 1857, 48.

¹⁰ *Independent*, April 9, 1857, 1.

gregationalist, leading New England Congregational journal, also rallied to his side: "New England may well take pride in him. . . . Not more truly did Mr. Sumner embody in Washington the detestation of human chattelism that stirs the bosom of Massachusetts, than does Dr. Cheever represent in New York the anti-slavery zeal of the clergy and people of New England. His 'madness' is a halo of glory to his head."¹¹ And so the battle raged. Some approved, some disapproved. For Cheever there was no turning back. Henceforth his livelihood depended upon his achievements as an abolitionist clergyman.

The storm in the press did not bother Cheever. He rather enjoyed a controversy. From all parts of the North he received letters of encouragement, Owen Lovejoy, Edward Everett, Richard P. Waters, Amos Blanchard and others. The most disturbing question to Cheever was whether the uprising within the Church of the Puritans could be successfully quelled. On April 27, 1857, a group of seventeen of the wealthiest church members were joined by the three deacons in demanding that Cheever sever his pastoral connection with the Church.¹² The letter which these men drew up was presented to Cheever in secret with the hope that he would resign quietly, thereby avoiding any unpleasant repercussions. Cheever insolently ignored the request for a written reply. Instead, at the Sunday morning service of May 17, he publicly revealed the letter's contents, and without consulting the Church clerk invited all members of the church and congregation to a meeting to be held in the lecture room May 18.¹³

The Monday evening meeting was naturally opened by a prayer from the pastor. Cheever exceeded the usual bounds of prayer by characterizing the letter as irregular, and by offering to throw himself upon the "love and confidence" of the church. Amid constant bickering between the two factions, Charles Abernethy's motion of confidence in George Cheever was carried unanimously,

¹¹ *Ibid.*, May 7, 1857, 1.

¹² The letter assigned no specific cause for the request for Cheever's resignation. The signers, including the deacons, three-fourths of the trustees, and all the Prudential Committee, carefully pointed out that they sympathized with Cheever's views on the freedom of the pulpit. Church of the Puritans, *A Narrative of Recent Occurrences*, 18.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

the minority declining to vote. The Reverend C. J. Warren, a new member of the church, introduced a motion to censure the pastor's opponents; but it was finally withdrawn, and a conciliatory motion by Dr. A. S. Ball was accepted in its stead.¹⁴

On the following Sabbath, Cheever again, on his own initiative, issued a call for a special business meeting for May 26. Because the Church clerk had not been advised of this action, the minority contended that all proceedings at this meeting were illegal. E. W. Chester moved the appointment of a Nominating Committee to prepare a slate of officers for the June annual meeting. This contemplated action was contrary to the usual church procedure, and was vigorously protested by the minority. Seth B. Hunt offered an amendment whereby a committee of three would be appointed to report necessary revisions of the standing rules, especially regarding the deacons. Chester accepted the modifying amendment, and after bitter discussion, the motion was carried. Immediately, Chester arose with a list of amendments, and ventured to say that the present board of deacons was not truly representative of the church. At Hunt's suggestion the proposed amendments were referred to the newly created committee consisting of Charles Abernethy, E. W. Chester, and Charles R. Harvey.¹⁵ At a special meeting on June 2, Chester reviewed the contemplated amendments.

The adjourned annual meeting was convened on June 4, 1857. As anticipated, there were fireworks galore. The main controversy hinged on the report of the special committee regarding deacons. In 1848, largely at the insistence of George Cheever, the office of deacon was invested with life tenure. O. E. Wood, one of the church founders and its first officer, had previously been a Presbyterian deacon. Kingsley (1852) and Johnson (1854) had likewise served as Presbyterian officials before joining the Church of the Puritans. Since these three men had signed the letter demanding Cheever's resignation, the special committee recommended that life tenure be abolished in favor of annual election with one year's ineligibility before reelection. After only one reading, the report was adopted by a 42 to 17 vote.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-12.

The Cheever faction regarded the outcome as a great triumph. Cheever confided to his sister, "God has greatly and mercifully blessed us, in keeping the church, firm and resolute, and now at our annual meeting we have decapitated all the deacons. . . . The result is admirable; a clean and perfect victory thus far. . . . I trust that God will keep the enemy as still as a stone; or if they attempt additional disturbance, he will overwhelm them in the depths of the sea."¹⁷ Cheever felt all righteousness was on his side and all wrongdoing on the other. His conservative opponents also invoked God's blessing for they regarded Cheever's doctrines much as today's Americans regard Communism.

The *Tribune*, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, and the *Independent* rejoiced in the majority's victory. The *Observer* and the *Herald* were frankly disappointed. The *Herald* had hoped Cheever would be turned out of his pulpit because Southern newspapers had been copying Cheever's addresses as typical of Northern reaction to the Dred Scott decision. The comments of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* were:

The few wealthy hunkers who sought to coax or drive him from the pulpit for his fidelity in denouncing the sin of slavery have been ingloriously defeated. . . . We rejoice in their discomfiture, and trust that Dr. Cheever will not, in a mistaken spirit of conciliation toward such insidious forces of Christianity, do anything to mar the dignity and sublimity of his position. . . ."¹⁸

The opposition, small in numbers but rich in wealth and influence, was outraged by the majority's high-handed methods. Twenty-seven persons requested the clerk for a new meeting. On July 12 Cheever announced a meeting for July 16¹⁹—a date when he knew he would be lecturing in Oxford, Ohio.

Both sides laid careful plans for the show-down. The Y. M. C. A. of the Church of the Puritans adopted a series of resolutions endorsing Cheever's abolition sermons. It also recorded its opposition to the dissenting minority, promising to aid the pastor "in sunshine and darkness."²⁰ The Cheever-controlled

¹⁷ G. B. C. to his sister, New York, June 12, 1857.

¹⁸ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 20, 1857, 5.

¹⁹ Church of the Puritans, *A Narrative of Recent Occurrences*, 8.

²⁰ Theo. D. Warren to G. B. C., New York, July 8, 1857.

Prudential Committee, which had been elected at the recent annual meeting, met at the house of Charles Abernethy on July 14, 1857. A chairman was designated, and the voting list canvassed to insure control of the forthcoming meeting. All present agreed that the opposition should not be allowed to read its protest, if it contained references to the absent pastor. All except Benjamin Martin felt the minority should be given an opportunity to present its report in September.²¹

The business meeting was a cut-and-dried affair. The opposition had prepared an elaborate explanation of its reasons for demanding Cheever's resignation.²² The minority refused to entertain any such document, and the session adjourned with no accomplishments except intensified bitterness. This disaffected element must have anticipated this turn of events, because it published the full text of the protest in the next morning's *Journal of Commerce*.²³ The document contained an extensive account of the intra-church warfare. All the minor disagreements over the years were fully aired. Two major themes ran through the report: (1) the insistence that it was Cheever's dictatorship rather than his abolitionism which produced the quarrel; (2) the evidence which proved, in spite of all contrary allegations, that slavery actually was the major issue. In one place the document specifically stated that Cheever's refusal to support a Sabbath-afternoon service, his interference with Howard Crosby's Bible class, his assumption of the office of moderator at the annual meeting, and other petty offences were the sole causes of the conflict.²⁴ Yet in another place it was asserted that though a free pulpit on slavery was desirable, "we do not believe that good is to be gained to the cause of Freedom by violent oburgation, by abusive epithets, by elaborate sarcasm, by impetuous denunciations, though piled mountain high on its opposers. 'Speaking the truth in love,' we think a better way of securing love for the truth." The opposition asserted that the pulpit was not the proper place for the "fulmination of rhetorical artillery," nor "until the command 'thus saith the Lord' is as direct and personal to the Christian minister as it was to Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel or John,

²¹ Benjamin N. Martin to G. B. C., New York, July 15, 1857.

²² Church of the Puritans, *A Narrative of Recent Occurrences*, 22-48.

²³ W. C. Gilman to G. B. C., New York, July 17, 1857.

²⁴ Church of the Puritans, *A Narrative of Recent Occurrences*, 31.

or until he can speak with like divine intuition and authority as the Lord Jesus Christ, do we think it his right to denounce those who differ with him on questions of morals and politics, as 'hypocrites,' 'white sepulchres, full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness' or to threaten them with the vengeance of Jehovah. . . ." ²⁵

The majority were perplexed. Should they answer the charges of their opponents? B. N. Martin, Cheever's confidence man, urged his pastor to "say nothing." ²⁶ E. W. Chester felt counsel should be retained to protect the majority's rights and perhaps institute slander proceedings against the protest's authors. ²⁷ Seth B. Hunt, still loyal to Cheever, wrote from his summer home, "To tell the truth I think it is very *weak*. I could make out a case against you a great deal stronger." His advice was to ignore the whole thing. ²⁸

An attempt was made to have the document suppressed. The *Tribune* and *Evening Post* cooperated but the hostile *Times* printed it in full. ²⁹ At a prayer meeting Joel Blackmer and Dr. Ball urged conciliation. Dexter Fairbank and Professor Thompson frowned upon such a move. Dr. Henry Hartt published an article in the *Tribune* which in its essence constituted a reply to the dissenters. ³⁰ The Church of the Puritans was hopelessly divided. The only solution that might have saved the Church was Cheever's resignation. But Cheever would not resign; and the Church remained as a "house divided against itself."

Throughout the spring and summer of 1857, Cheever kept up his incessant denunciations of slavery and slaveholders. At the annual meeting of the New England Emigrant Aid Company ³¹ and at the anniversary of the Tract Society ³² in Boston, Cheever

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁶ Benjamin N. Martin to G. B. C., New York, July 18, 1857.

²⁷ E. W. Chester to G. B. C., New York, July 17, 1857.

²⁸ Seth B. Hunt to G. B. C., Bennington, Vermont, July 27, 1857.

²⁹ Benjamin N. Martin to G. B. C., New York, July 18, 1857.

³⁰ Benjamin N. Martin to G. B. C., New York, July 30, 1857.

³¹ Edward E. Hale to G. B. C., Worcester, April 17, 1857; Richard P. Waters to G. B. C., April 6, 1857.

³² The *Boston Courier* commented as follows: "Dr. Cheever was presumptuous and denunciatory, and indeed, his tone scarcely becoming a mere creature, was little, if any short of blasphemous." *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 4, 1857.

poured forth a torrent of abuse and invective. Whether from his own pulpit or from the lyceum platform his arguments were essentially the same.

Cheever was annoyed that he could not crush his opponents. Heretofore his denunciations had always enhanced his prestige and strengthened his control over his congregations. Now he was up against a force he could not comprehend. Denounce as vehemently and as often as he could, he was unable to stamp out the opposition. He became worried, and worrying made him irritable. Thinking his own viewpoint was always right, he found his best friends, one after the other, turning against him. To his sister, Cheever confessed his bewilderment: "It is difficult wholly to separate the sense of personality and personal malice or injury from the sense of outrage against truth and God."³³ Could it be that Cheever felt he, "God's prophet," should be immune from the calumnies of his fellow Christians?

The split within the Church at Union Square came at a very inopportune moment. The withdrawal of the wealthy members, and the Panic of 1857, which wiped away the savings of many of the remaining parishioners, drastically reduced the income of the Church. The Cheevers suddenly found that their personal fortune had dwindled by the amount of \$12,000.³⁴ Unless increased revenues were forthcoming, the church would be forced to close. Hoping for a miracle, Cheever clung to his pastorate.

When Cheever returned to New York City in the fall of 1857, he renewed his vitriolic assaults on slavery. By frequent references to the Scriptures, he would demonstrate the sinfulness of slavery. Then he would exhort preachers to answer God's call to expose national sins. Drawing upon the lessons of history Cheever would demonstrate that those nations which failed to heed God's warnings, eventually paid the penalty. He invariably contended that the commandment to *Love Thy Neighbor* and the Golden Rule

³³ G. B. C. to his sister, Saratoga Springs, August 19, 1857. While visiting at Andover where he was a commencement orator, Cheever, aided by the Andover professors, drew up a detailed reply to his enemies. He forwarded it to New York for approval. Dr. Hartt and other intimate friends finally persuaded him to withhold the article. B. N. Martin to G. B. C., New York, August 12, 1857; E. W. Chester to G. B. C., New York, August 18, 1857.

³⁴ Henry Cheever to Elizabeth, New York, October 14, 1857.

were not solely applicable to white men any more than was the Declaration of Independence. The worst features of American slavery were vividly portrayed for his audiences. The "compound interest of slaveholding," by which the slaveowner obtained title to the children of slaves, was particularly obnoxious to Cheever, and was elaborately condemned. "Time-serving" ministers, "pussy-footing" editors, "south-side" merchants, the American Tract Society, any persons or organizations which upheld slavery or straddled it, found themselves within the range of Cheever's devastating fire. As early as 1857, he began preaching the "irrepressible conflict": "These two things cannot live together: a slavery, aggressive, jealous, devouring as the sea, that requires such abnegation of principle and conscience, such barbarous laws and such brutal ferocity in their execution, developing its remorseless despotism in them, and a freedom, whose whole soul of justice and humanity rises up against them; the one must destroy the other."³⁵ Each fresh outburst between the sections was ferociously treated by Cheever, but the staple of each speech closely followed the above pattern.

The American Tract Society had long been a favorite target for Cheever. In early 1858, it received the dubious honor of a constant attack. Shaft after shaft was directed against the Society's slavery policy. In February, he said, "As now conducted it has proved *unfaithful to its own constitution; to the cause of humanity and God; to the cause of truth and of evangelical religion*. By throwing itself, as it has done, as a shield between slavery and the public sentiment of Christendom *opposed to slavery, it has become the enemy of liberty and the bulwark of oppression*."³⁶

When the anniversary of the Tract Society was held in New York City, May, 1858, there was a free-for-all struggle between

³⁵ George B. Cheever, *God Against Slavery* (New York, 1857), 179. This book of nearly three hundred pages contained Bible proof against slavery, and two of Cheever's most popular lectures. One, first delivered at the musical academy on October 30, 1856, was entitled "Iniquity of the Extension of Slavery." The other, "A Discourse on the Divinely-Appointed Freedom of the Pulpit, the Senate, and the Press for the Preservation of Freedom to Mankind," was prepared in June 1856. By 1857 it had been repeated in Brooklyn, Williamsburg, Flushing, Newport, Providence and Salem.

³⁶ *Independent*, February 4, 1858, 1.

the abolition faction and the "Mugwumps." Cheever, as the most radical speaker, called for a forceful condemnation of slavery; but his efforts were unavailing.³⁷ The editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Oliver Johnson, charged that Joseph Thompson and Leonard Bacon, the *Independent* editors, were primarily responsible for the failure to adopt a more positive policy.³⁸ A week after the regular meeting of the Tract Society, a group denominating itself as "Conservative Members of the Tract Society" arranged a public meeting at the Church of the Puritans. Before a densely crowded house, several anti-slavery ministers, including Cheever, spoke in favor of tracts upon the sinfulness of slavery.³⁹ If the speakers expected that the Tract Society would reverse its stand on slavery, they were doomed to disappointment for the managers of the society took no official notice of the "rump" session.

On May 13, 1858, Cheever, for the first time, appeared as a speaker at the anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Although Cheever carefully explained to his audience that he did not share the religious beliefs of many Anti-Slavery Society officials, it was significant that he even consented to appear on their platforms. Heretofore, he had purposely refrained from actively associating with abolitionists; but circumstances now made such a connection increasingly necessary. Oliver Johnson and Parker Pillsbury both rejoiced in his action, and urged him to take up the mantle of 100% abolitionism.⁴⁰

One of the church societies dearest to Cheever's heart was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, of which he was a corporator. For years he had labored valiantly to raise thousands of dollars for its missionary projects. He had often defended this society against the attacks of the Episcopalians and Catholics, for it was through the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions that Protestants carried the "white-man's burden" to heathen peoples. Even as late as August, 1858, Cheever issued a public appeal, through the columns of the *Independent*, for funds to relieve the society's pecuniary embarrassments.⁴¹

³⁷ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 22, 1858, 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Independent*, May 27, 1858, 1.

⁴⁰ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 22, 1858, 3-4.

⁴¹ *Independent*, August 19, 1858.

For several decades there had been missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions laboring among the Choctaws and Cherokees in Indian Territory. In 1858 it was rumored in the North that a new slave state would be carved out of the area where these missionaries had been active. It was further rumored that the missionaries from the North had secretly sanctioned slavery among the Indians in order to maintain their influence in competition with the missionary representatives of the pro-slavery churches of the South. That the efforts of the American Board to enlighten and uplift the Indians should culminate in an endorsement of slavery appalled Cheever. Immediately he demanded that the American Board clarify the stand of its missionaries among the Indians.⁴²

When the annual meeting convened in Detroit in October, there was very little discussion of the Choctaw and Cherokee missions, and no action at all. Cheever was dumbfounded. His editorial associates at the *Independent* office publicly rebuked him for his derogatory remarks about the American Board.⁴³ The editors did not pretend satisfaction with the missionaries' actions, but felt Cheever had no license to condemn them in harsh terms, since they were acting as local conditions commanded. Cheever was furious! In the next issue of the *Independent* he snapped back viciously. He denounced Bacon and Thompson and maligned the President of the American Board, Mark Hopkins.⁴⁴ Not very careful of his facts, he indiscriminately tossed about phrases which he later had to withdraw, when Hopkins challenged his authorities.⁴⁵ A typical Cheever statement was: "But this mighty Association, altogether holding its peace at such a time, falls lamentably short, to say the least of its great duty and privilege with the Word of God, and must be confessed to have been in Esther's place without her courage. What a sacrifice of opportunity, what a waste of power. . ." ⁴⁶

There was a varied reaction to Cheever's rejoinder. Samuel

⁴² *Ibid.*, September 2, 1858, 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, September 30, 1858, 1; October 14, 1858, 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, September 30, 1858, 1; October 7, 1858; October 21, 1858.

⁴⁵ Mark Hopkins to G. B. C., Williamstown, October 9, 1858; *Independent*, October 28, 1858.

⁴⁶ *Independent*, October 7, 1858, 1.

Wolcott, pastor of a Providence, Rhode Island, church, declared that he would withdraw all financial support from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Lewis Tappan wrote, "I hope your lance will be kept sharpened until the hide of every rhinoceros is pierced with truth." Seth B. Hunt and Jonathan Blanchard applauded Cheever's stand. William Harlow of Wrentham charged Cheever with hypocrisy, because the latter preferred to be a Puritan within the ranks of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions rather than a Separatist and a supporter of the rival missionary society, the American Missionary Society.⁴⁷ Leonard Bacon and Joseph Thompson, conservative anti-slavery editors and preachers, staunchly defended the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, averring that it would be impolitic to denounce slavery in bold terms.⁴⁸ Cheever interpreted this as a move to stifle him, but he refused to be silenced. Cheever's outlook was warped by the conviction that if the American Board would denounce its slavery-sanctioning missionaries, then slavery among the Indians would cease. He simply could not or would not accept the idea that the condemnation of slavery by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions would result in the ejection of Northern missionaries by rival organizations without any molestation of slavery.⁴⁹ For weeks and months the controversy continued between the regular editors of the *Independent* and its special correspondent. To Cheever's

⁴⁷ Samuel Wolcott to G. B. C., Providence, October 8, 1858; William Harlow to G. B. C., Wrentham, October 11, 1858; Lewis Tappan to G. B. C., New York, October 21, 1858; Seth B. Hunt to Henry C. Bowen, Bennington, October 30, 1858; Jonathan Blanchard to G. B. C., Galesburgh, November 1, 1858.

⁴⁸ The editors prefaced their remarks thus: "Probably there is no practical question whatever, on which our opinions and those of our valued contributor 'C' would be exactly coincident. His manner of judging upon and dealing with concrete questions is so well understood that most readers are in little danger of being harmed by too much sympathy with his errors when he happens to overlap, on one side or the other, those boundaries which inclose the simple truth . . ." *Independent*, October 14, 1858, 4.

⁴⁹ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 9, 1858, quoted from the Richmond (Va.) *Central Presbyterian* relative to Cheever's article on the American Board that a condemnation of slavery by the A. B. C. F. M. would be welcomed in the South. Then the General Assembly of Presbyterian Church would be able to take over the Indian missions and preach the true gospel which sanctioned slavery.

discomfort and the great glee of Bacon and Thompson, the New York *Observer*, hitherto Cheever's confirmed enemy, stalwartly upheld Cheever's position. The only accomplishment of the unfortunate debate was more confusion on an already hopelessly confused subject.

The battle within the Church of the Puritans had blazed uninterruptedly since 1857. When it became apparent to the wealthy minority that the numerical majority would not grant them a satisfactory hearing, they applied for letters of dismissal to other churches. The majority could not agree on the proper course of action. Some took the position that regular dismissal letters should be issued, and that the church should consider itself lucky to be rid of its discontented element. Others, apparently supported by Cheever, felt that the alleged indiscretions of the minority called for disciplinary measures. Consequently, regular letters were granted to some, while others received special letters without recommendation to the fellowship of other churches.⁵⁰ As soon as these letters were issued, the majority refused to permit these "former" members any voice in the subsequent meetings of the Church of the Puritans, even though they were still members in good standing, according to Congregational practice, until they had been received by other churches. The next move on the part of the excluded members was to request the convening of a mutual council, to which other Congregational churches would be invited, and at which the recent events taking place at the Church of the Puritans would be fully discussed and amicably settled. The majority, unwilling to have their actions subjected to the searching scrutiny of impartial observers, declined to entertain the request. The only alternative for the disaffected members was an *ex-parte* council which they called in May, 1859.

The *ex-parte* Council, composed of delegates from representative Congregational churches, did not consider the general situation within the Church of the Puritans, because all the relevant documents were not at its disposal, and more particularly because its province was restricted to the question of whether the disaffected brethren were entitled to regular letters of dismissal. The unani-

⁵⁰ *Independent*, February 24, 1859, 4 (editorial); *New York Tribune*, February 18, 1859, 4. The *Tribune* carried a very full and sympathetic account of the quarrels within Cheever's church.

mous decision of the Council was that, according to regular Congregational practice, these members should have been granted accredited letters of dismissal with the privileges of normal participation in the business meetings of the Church of the Puritans until accepted by other churches. The Council pointed out that the only Congregational methods of discipline were *admonition*, exclusion from communion till repentance, and *excommunication*, neither of which had been invoked.⁵¹ This decision was approved by the leading Congregational periodicals, the *Congregational Journal*, the *Congregational Herald*, and the *Congregationalist*.

As soon as the Council's decision became public, Cheever began bludgeoning the *ex-parte* session for its "presumption and impertinence" in commenting upon affairs relating to the Union Square Church. He presented his attack in such a distorted manner that it appeared as though seventeen members, including millionaires, judges, and three deacons, were over-riding four hundred members, the majority of them poor people. Cheever naturally was angry that the minority had dared to call an *ex-parte* council, and he rambled along for several columns in a denunciatory fashion.⁵² It was absolutely impossible for Cheever to meet opponents in a spirit of friendliness and conciliation.

Leonard Bacon, the spiritual advisor of the Council, immediately attempted a refutation of Cheever's claims, and pointed out several instances of falsification and misrepresentation on the part of Cheever. Bacon asserted that Cheever should be the last man in the world to object to the Council's course of action, since he personally had censured practically everything in existence with which he did not agree. Bacon also alleged that it was nobody's fault but Cheever's that it had been an *ex-parte* council rather than a mutual affair.⁵³ For several weeks Bacon and Cheever continued to exchange blows in the *Independent* without getting anywhere. Cheever and his majority had violated Congregational practice in order to discipline a wealthy minority. The only justification for such action lay in the necessity of preserving the Church of the Puritans as an anti-slavery citadel. Now that a portion of the dis-

⁵¹ *Independent*, February 24, 1859, 1; *New York Tribune*, February 18, 1859, 3-4.

⁵² *Independent*, February 24, 1859, 1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, March 3, 1859, 4-5.

affected element had been cut off, would Cheever be able to satisfy the remainder?

For a time it seemed as though the Church of the Puritans was more prosperous than ever. In early 1859, \$3000 was raised to build twelve western churches, \$4000 was appropriated to extinguish the society's floating debt, and a personal testimonial of \$1000 was presented to the pastor.⁵⁴ However, the love-feast was short-lived. In February, Cheever and a few intimate friends commissioned Miss Elizabeth Johnstone as agent to solicit in Great Britain funds which would make the Church of the Puritans financially independent. Some optimistic souls even suggested \$50,000 as a desirable amount. It was planned to place the money in an endowment fund, which with the usual collections would place Cheever's church beyond the reach of his enemies.

This "begging mission" was not sanctioned at its inception by the Church. The first inkling of its existence came when New York papers published an inquiry from F. W. Chesson, Secretary of the London Emancipation Society, regarding Cheever's anti-slavery position and the true conditions within the Church of the Puritans.⁵⁵ At once pandemonium broke loose. The *Independent* cried aloud: "We will not believe that Dr. Cheever or his church have so far lost their self-respect as to make this humiliating appeal to England for assistance. It is slander upon Dr. Cheever to say that with all his genius, and eloquence, and fidelity, he is not able to sustain himself in a church to which he has so ably ministered for ten years."⁵⁶ Either the *Independent* editors had not questioned Cheever regarding the mission, or they were purposely putting him on the spot. The *Independent* further pointed out that the Church of the Puritans was out of debt and had liberally subscribed to the building funds of other churches. What Thompson presumably did not know was that Cheever's parishioners were trying to starve him out by a refusal to appropriate funds for current expenses, including the minister's salary.⁵⁷ About the only newspaper friend

⁵⁴ The \$1000 was presented to Cheever in January, 1859. G. B. C. to Ichabod Washburn, New York, January 8, 1859. The *Independent* of March 31, 1859 (editorial), carried an account of the raising of the other \$7000.

⁵⁵ *Independent*, June 23, 1859, 4 (editorial).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Cheever's church was built on leased ground. Annual rent had been \$1500. It was now raised to \$2000 and apparently would go still higher.

Cheever had left was the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*,⁵⁸ and its support was rather disconcerting to Cheever since its editor had frequently chided Cheever for his hypocritical abolitionism. Adversity was making strange bed-fellows. The minister did not wish to be known other than as an orthodox preacher; but now he found it increasingly important to make friends with the Garrisonians.

⁵⁸ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 7, 1859—"With this exception [American Anti-Slavery Society] we can think of no anti-slavery work of more importance than that which has for its object the support of Dr. Cheever in his position as an uncompromising foe of slavery in a conspicuous pulpit in the largest city of the United States."

CHAPTER XII

DISSENSION WITHIN THE RANKS AT UNION SQUARE

As conditions within the Union Square Church became more complicated, Cheever, by choice and by necessity, spent more time lecturing. For three weeks in December, 1858, he was touring Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Providence, Lowell, Salem, Boston, Worcester, New Haven and Jewett City were included in the itinerary. In each city he was greeted by large audiences, and at Providence the Rhode Island Governor joined him on the platform.¹ In early February, 1859, Cheever was back in Worcester to discuss plans with Ichabod Washburn,² Timothy Gilbert, Henry Cheever and others for the establishment of a new abolition society, the Church Anti-Slavery Society.³ Wherever Cheever went he could be found preaching or lecturing to hundreds of people. It seems reasonable to believe that many of his listeners must have come out of sheer curiosity rather than sympathy with the speaker's point of view.

On March 7, Cheever invaded Philadelphia for the first time as an abolitionist. Despite inclement weather, there was a dense throng to hear him, although most of them were Reformed Presbyterians and Garrisonian Abolitionists rather than the Church group Cheever would have preferred. "It was the most thorough exposition of anti-slavery truth, in its bearing upon the Church and clergy, that I have ever had the pleasure of listening to from an orthodox minister,"⁴ reported the correspondent of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. The substance of the speech was the usual attack upon the Fugitive Slave law, the Dred Scott Decision, the Church, the Tract Society, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.⁵

¹ G. B. C. to his wife, December 7, 8, 13, 14, 17 and 18, 1858.

² Ichabod Washburn, wealthy manufacturer of Worcester, Massachusetts, had married Elizabeth Cheever for his second wife in 1858.

³ Cheever attended the sessions in Worcester on March 1 and 2 when the Declaration of Principles, Constitution, and Letter to the Churches were framed. Henry Cheever of Jewett City, Connecticut, was elected Secretary and Ichabod Washburn became Treasurer. The Church Anti-Slavery Society was pledged to the total abolition of slavery as demanded by the Word of God. *Worcester Spy*, March 2, 1859; G. B. C. to his wife, Worcester, March 1 and 2, 1859.

⁴ March 19, 1859.

In March a group of prominent New Yorkers, headed by Horace Greeley, John Jay, William A. Butler, R. Hildreth, and John W. Edmonds, "in testimony of our profound appreciation of your labors and sacrifices in the cause of Christian purity and national righteousness," invited Cheever to deliver an address at the famed Cooper Institute that "thousands of our fellow citizens may share with us the interest and profit of hearing you."⁶ Cheever gladly accepted, and delivered the lecture before a capacity audience on April 6, 1859. Although there was nothing distinguishing about the content of the speech, the occasion did represent a distinct triumph for Cheever.

At the anniversary meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York City in May, 1859, George Cheever was the chief subject of the discussion. For several years the radical abolitionists had sought to force Cheever into their ranks. Now it appeared as though they had been thwarted by the establishment of the rival Church Anti-Slavery Society, of which George Cheever was a leading sponsor. Consequently, the Garrisonians now attacked the clergyman very vehemently. Parker Pillsbury, as the keynoter, ridiculed Cheever because he denounced slavery and still retained fellowship with slave-holders. Wendell Phillips echoed Pillsbury's sentiments: "He [Cheever] is today in the most harmful position of any man in the Northern States. He utters truth as burning as truth can be, and in doing this he stands before the country in the black and bloody dress of an American church-member of the Congregational Church."⁷ After Cheever had been vindicated by Theodore Tilton,⁸ whom Cheever had baptized into the abolition ranks, and by Dr. Henry A. Hartt, President of the

⁵ Cheever had delivered the same address before the New York legislature on February 25. Susan B. Anthony reported it: "His scathing denunciations . . . were overwhelming, and the sarcasm with which he uttered 'the benevolent nurses of the Tract Society,' 'Christian body thieves' . . . was most terrible. . . ." *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 2, 1859. Cheever's squeamishness about "feminists" as abolitionists was fading fast.

⁶ Horace Greeley, and others to G. B. C. (no date).

⁷ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 21, 1859; May 28, 1859. The columns of these two issues were largely devoted to the annual meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society.

⁸ Paxton, Hibben, *Henry Ward Beecher, An American Portrait* (New York, 1927), 167. It was Cheever who induced Tilton to join the staff of the *Independent* in 1860. *Ibid.*

New York Church Anti-Slavery Society, William Lloyd Garrison ascended the platform. Garrison frankly admitted that he felt Cheever should be prodded into the ranks of the Abolition Society. "I am very sure that if Dr. Cheever is faithful to the anti-slavery principles which he enunciates, and will not compromise them at all, he will find that he must come to this platform."⁹

After others had risen to defend Cheever's course of action, Garrison again secured the floor. "I know of no man in this country who is speaking such words of power against slavery as Dr. Cheever; no man who is so gifted in the graphic power of delineation as to the horrible enormity of the sin of slavery; and of complicity with it, as Dr. Cheever; and yet, there is something, after all, I apprehend growing out of his education and position which is of more importance to him than the slave and his deliverance."¹⁰ Garrison, who had known Cheever as a promising abolitionist twenty years previously, realized better than the rest that Cheever's love of the church was paramount in the pastor's life.

These attacks were continued at the Boston convention of the New England Anti-Slavery Society.¹¹ Perhaps as Garrison expected, Cheever remained outside the fold. During the sessions in New York, Cheever had been attending the convention of the Church Anti-Slavery Society. In Boston he was the principal speaker at the anniversary of the American Missionary Association, indicating that he had temporarily abandoned the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.¹² Much as the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and the *Liberator* might criticize Cheever, there was a vast difference between their derogatory remarks and those of the *Observer*, *Evangelist*, and the *Independent*. The former genuinely appreciated Cheever's abolition addresses, while the latter journals deplored their radicalism.

In late June, 1859, Cheever was touring northern New York State. On August 1 he was the principal speaker at Geneva's celebration of West India Emancipation. The trustees of the Presbyterian Church locked the doors, and forced the speakers into

⁹ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 21, 1859.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 4, 1859.

¹² At this anniversary Cheever reviewed Nehemiah Adams' *Southern View of Slavery* in scathing terms. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 18, 1859, 2.

the open air where a "vast gathering of people were subjected to abolitionism and a good drenching."¹³ From Geneva, Cheever travelled to Niagara, Buffalo, Saratoga and way stations. Wherever he went he was greeted by immense audiences.

After a late summer vacation at Saratoga Springs, Cheever embarked on a western tour carrying him through Utica, Cazenovia, Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, Milwaukee, Oberlin College, Columbus, Ohio, Rochester, New York, and many smaller communities. In Chicago he addressed sessions of the American Missionary Association, the Y. M. C. A., and the Christian Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁴ He was accorded such an enthusiastic reception that he longed to spend an entire month preaching and lecturing in the West. "It is wonderful to see how widespread the knowledge and influence of my poor articles in the *Independent*, all through the country."¹⁵ When visiting in Columbus, Cheever was the guest of Salmon P. Chase,¹⁶ an old friend, with whom he talked over the anti-slavery situation and the electoral potentialities of the Republican party. In several communities resolutions of encouragement and sympathy were adopted in Cheever's behalf.

When Cheever returned to New York City he found church affairs in a turmoil. His letter of October 7, 1859, to Rev. C. H. Spurgeon of London, in reply to Spurgeon's request for information on the Johnstone mission, had found its way into the New York press. In this letter Cheever had explained that the mission was secret, having been authorized by "a few of us" who were "convinced that we must have aid from some quarter or be conquered." He had represented the conflict in the Church of the Puritans as originating solely from his abolition preaching. He spoke of the apathy of the American clergy and asserted that the rest of the New York clergy did not preach slavery as a sin. Therefore it was peculiarly necessary to preserve at least one abolitionist church in New York City. "Whatever aid you may be able to gain for us, or whatever help you can extend Miss Johnstone . . . is truly greatly needed, and will be most thankfully received. . . ." ¹⁷

For one reason or another, this letter aroused the ire of the

¹³ G. B. C. to his wife, Geneva, New York, August 2, 1859.

¹⁴ G. B. C. to his wife, Chicago, October 17, 18, 19, 1859.

¹⁵ G. B. C. to Henry, Oberlin, October 25, 1859.

¹⁶ G. B. C. to —, Columbus, Ohio, October 27, 1859.

¹⁷ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 19, 1859.

New York editors. The *New York Express* exclaimed, "No true American gentleman, be he Christian or otherwise, can but feel the greatest mortification at seeing the letter of Dr. Cheever."¹⁸ The *Observer* remarked: "It is extraordinary that a first-class, long-established church in the most fashionable quarter of the town should send a female agent over sea to seek alms."¹⁹ The *Christian Intelligencer*, the organ of the Dutch Reformed Church, said: "It is currently believed in this city that the Church of the Puritans has been converted into a school for the education of lunatics." The *Journal of Commerce* suggested that the Presbyterians take over the Church of the Puritans. The *New York Times* observed that the appeal to Britain "savors sadly of a most unbecoming egotism and self-conceit."²⁰ The *Independent* rejoiced that neither the church society nor the congregation had sanctioned the mission.²¹ Only the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* remained loyal to Cheever.

True, the mission was authorized in secret by a small band of abolitionists led by George Cheever. At a meeting of the Board of Trustees on November 14, 1859, a resolution was unanimously adopted disavowing all responsibility for the acts of Miss Johnstone as unauthorized agent of Puritan Church.²² The *Independent* was jubilant. Its editors applauded this blunt repudiation, and attacked Cheever as an insincere and malicious perverter of the truth. They further accused him of "unfraternal insinuations"; and asserted that many of New York's preachers were prominent anti-slaveryites long before Cheever even "peeped" about slavery, and while he was still eulogizing Daniel Webster and attacking the Hudson River Railroad.²³

The intra-church struggle was rendered more complex by

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 26, 1859, from the *Observer*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Independent*, November 17, 1859, 4 (editorial).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.* If these editors had consulted the files of their own newspapers for 1850-1852, they would have retracted these latter statements. Nevertheless, the comments of the *Independent* were much milder than those of the other papers. After all, the *Independent* was still the organ by which Cheever reached the public. As usual, he was permitted to present his rebuttal.

Cheever's attitude toward the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and John Brown. At the annual meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Philadelphia in October, 1859, Cheever had been a thorn in the side of the conservatives. He had offered an amendment to a report by the Committee on the Choctaws and Cherokees. The essence of the amendment was a condemnation of slavery among the missions. In support of his amendment, Cheever read a prepared speech which the *Evangelist* denoted as an "infliction" upon the good nature of the convention. The next day Cheever offered a carefully-drawn memorial to Congress against the re-opening of the slave trade, in the name of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Heated debates followed, but the memorial was finally laid on the table where it died. The general impression seems to be that Cheever made himself very obnoxious to his opponents at this meeting.²⁴

While Cheever was on his Western tour, John Brown had attempted a *coup d'état* at Harper's Ferry. The South was enraged, and the North was shocked by this revolutionary endeavor to solve the slavery problem. So strong a wave of disapproval swept the North that Gerrit Smith went temporarily insane, and Dr. Howe fled to Canada. Both of these men were under-cover instigators of the Brown uprising. Cheever, in no way connected with the abortive revolution, from the first expressed strong sympathy with John Brown. From Oberlin, he wrote to Henry Cheever: "If they hang John Brown for treason, they will yet find that they had better have hung Jefferson Davis for piracy. The latter is by far the more insane of the two, and the demonstration of the madness, I am inclined to think, is at hand."²⁵ At Grafton, Ohio, Cheever sought out John Brown's sister, and was pleased to learn that Brown was a pious Christian.²⁶

Back in his own pulpit, Cheever was courageous enough to uphold John Brown as a patriotic American. Every Democratic and Republican paper of the North repudiated John Brown, and only two of New York's five hundred ministers dared applaud

²⁴ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 22, 1859; Henry to Elizabeth, Jewett City, Connecticut, October 17, 1859.

²⁵ G. B. C. to Henry, Oberlin, October 25, 1859.

²⁶ G. B. C. to —, Columbus, October 27, 1859.

John Brown.²⁷ Cheever was one. In the *Independent* of November 10, 1859, he praised Brown's "grand, compact, clear answers," on his examination, as "trumpet tones of truth and earnestness." He speculated upon what a real invasion of slave territory might accomplish if only seventeen men could achieve so much. On December 15, at the Cooper Institute,²⁸ Cheever delivered another philippic entitled *John Brown's Treason Justified by the Word of God* in which he announced in tones as solemn as those of the Supreme Court that John Brown was guilty neither of treason nor murder. "If God's word required him [J. B.] to oppose it [slavery] he could commit no treason against the Constitution or against his country by obeying God." Cheever proclaimed that John Brown's insurrection was only the beginning. "The conflict is not between North and South, but between the South and God, and woe to him that striveth with his Maker. . . ."

So incensed were the publishers of the *New York Express* that they issued a call for a public meeting to prevent Cheever's gospel from passing as the accepted gospel in New York:

The undersigned, citizens of New York, desirous of vindicating the north, and expressing their sympathy with the men of the South in the present crisis, and their abhorrence of the motives and acts of John Brown and his followers, in their assault upon the peace, safety, lives and property of their fellow citizens of the state of Virginia, and in favor of giving a public expression of rebuke to the dangerous and revolutionary doctrines now currently taught of sympathy for murder and treason, and desirous of redeeming the North from the indiscriminating stigma cast upon its fidelity to the principles upon which the Union of these States was formed, are in favor of calling a public meeting in this city, at an early day, to give expression to the above sentiments. . . .²⁹

Cheever gave this notice considerable free publicity by making light of it in his *Independent* columns. Cheever even dared to predict that John Brown's letters were destined to an "immortality

²⁷ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 10, 1859, from the *New York Observer*.

²⁸ The speech was interrupted several times but Cheever was finally allowed to finish. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 31, 1859; G. B. C. to Henry, New York, December 17, 1859.

²⁹ *Independent*, December 15, 1859, 1.

of study and admiration" and that his martyrdom would be revered as one of the most heroic in the world's history.³⁰

In the early winter of 1860, Cheever diligently applied himself to the arduous task of preparing a volume which would refute the contentions of pro-Southern clergymen that the Bible sanctioned slavery. In *The Guilt of Slavery and the Crime of Slaveholding, Demonstrated from the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures*, Cheever attacked slavery from the philological, the statutory, the historical, and the moral bases. With painstaking care he analyzed every slavery reference in the Old and New Testaments to prove conclusively, as he thought, that the institution of slavery was proscribed by God. Although Cheever was thoroughly conversant with the original Greek and Hebrew, he supplemented his own research with that of other authorities. This work, which was copiously footnoted, has been considered by many scholars as the classic defence of the Bible against the charge that slavery was ordained by God.

At this particular time, Cheever fully expected that he would lose his pastorate, and he seriously considered taking up residence in Geneva, Switzerland, or Worcester, Massachusetts.³¹ The failure of Miss Johnstone's mission to Britain and Cheever's eulogies of John Brown had alienated many of Cheever's anti-slavery friends within the Union Square Church. In November, 1859, by a narrow margin, the society had sustained the British-Aid Mission; but he was deserted by those men, E. W. Chester, A. S. Ball, Charles R. Harvey, George White, Seth B. Hunt and Benjamin K. Phelps, who in 1857 had publicly announced:

Can we afford to seem to the world false to all the principles we profess to honor? Can we face the reproaches of the just, the brave, the large-hearted throughout the world? Can we afford to leave our children to blush for our cowardice? Can we afford them the legacy of a dishonored name? Brethren these things we cannot afford. Let us gather round our pastor. Let our hearts beat in unison with his, warming, cherishing, upholding him. . . .³²

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Henry to Elizabeth, Jewett City, February 21, 1860; Elizabeth Washburn to G. B. C., Worcester, March 3, 1860.

³² *Extract from a Report Presented to the Church of the Puritans*, June 4, 1857, mss.

His staunchest supporters in one crisis, they were now his bitter enemies. They represented practically all of the wealth still clinging to the Church of the Puritans, and several of them had conspicuous anti-slavery records. John Brown and Miss Johnstone were too much for them.

At church meetings held in the spring of 1860, there was incessant quarreling; and on one occasion, Cheever was saved by only two votes.³³ At the annual meeting, H. A. Hartt, W. A. Whiting, and T. J. Hall, Cheever's confederates, were elected to the board of trustees, but the election certificates were not immediately delivered. In the meantime, Charles Abernethy, the church clerk, had certified Cheever antagonists to the trustee offices on the charge of illegal voting. When these Cheever enemies sought admittance to the trustees' meeting, Edward Gilbert, still a Cheeverite, served an injunction to prevent them from exercising the duties of trustees.³⁴ After expensive litigation of several months' duration, the case was settled when a New York judge ordered election-certificates issued to Cheever's friends.³⁵ This was only one example of the fierce squabbling which took place. The Cheeverites always insisted that the sole issue was abolition preaching. This seems incredible. Many of the disaffected members had supported Cheever in his earlier quarrels, and it does appear that a large share of the blame for the constant warfare must be borne by George Cheever.

When John Brown, Jr., James Redpath, Frank Sanborn, and Thaddeus Hyatt failed to appear before the Mason Investigating Committee of the United States Senate to testify concerning their knowledge of John Brown's raid, warrants were sworn out for their arrest. Hyatt was the only one taken into custody. Because he refused to testify, simply for the sake of the principle involved, he was committed to the District of Columbia jail where he was confined for three months.³⁶ Hyatt was Cheever's personal friend,

³³ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, March 19, 1860.

³⁴ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 31, 1860.

³⁵ E. W. Chester and William Evarts, former leaders within the Church of the Puritans, were the opposition lawyers. Edward Gilbert and W. C. Noyes represented the Cheever faction. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 1, 1860.

³⁶ Oswald G. Villard, *John Brown, A Biography Fifty Years After* (New York, 1911), 582-583.

and had liberally subscribed to the fund which enabled Cheever to publish *The Guilt of Slavery*.³⁷ To show his sympathy for Hyatt, Cheever held a series of indignation meetings in the Church of the Puritans which were widely attended.³⁸ He also hammered away in the *Independent*, asserting that the Senate had no authority over Hyatt, that Senate regulations applied only to Senators, and that Hyatt was being deprived of his personal liberties without due process of law, since he had been charged with no crime and there had been no trial.³⁹

In May, 1860, Cheever consented to be the principal speaker at the New York and Boston anniversaries of the American Anti-Slavery Society.⁴⁰ In both instances he was warmly greeted by Garrison, Phillips, Pillsbury, and the other radicals who expressed the hope that "we shall often have an opportunity of listening to his powerful rhetoric and earnestness of appeal upon the anti-slavery platform."

In June Cheever joyfully hailed Charles Sumner's triumphant return to the Senate to renew the colossal struggle with slavery.⁴¹ To the discomfiture of some of his best friends, Cheever expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Republican party for its equivocal slavery policy. Cheever had anticipated that the Republican Convention would adopt a scorching anti-slavery plank. Unacquainted with the inner workings of a political machine, Cheever called for a party devoted solely to the abolition of slavery, whose platform was not fashioned for vote-getting purposes, and whose candidate was not chosen primarily for availability.

Meantime Cheever's British Aid-Mission upon which he counted so heavily had struck a snag. In Scotland, Miss Johnstone had been uniformly successful, but the Londoners were cold,⁴² especially after the American press had so vehemently ridiculed the Church of the Puritans for its foreign appeal. Moreover Cheever's American enemies had made certain that all the scandal

³⁷ Thaddeus Hyatt to G. B. C., Washington, D. C., June 9, 1860.

³⁸ *New York Herald*, May 12, 1860.

³⁹ *Independent*, March 8, 1860, 1; March 29, 1860, 1; May 30, 1860, 1; June 7, 1860, 1.

⁴⁰ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 12, 1860; June 9, 1860.

⁴¹ *Independent*, June 21, 1861, 1.

⁴² Elizabeth Johnstone to G. B. C., Glasgow, May 10, 1860.

regarding Cheever was faithfully repeated in Britain.⁴³ The British naturally were bewildered, and in most cases clung tightly to their spare change. Miss Johnstone was disappointed, finally informing Cheever that unless he paid a personal visit to Britain, the funds would not be collected.⁴⁴ The Church of the Puritans was in such a desperate financial plight that Cheever was easily induced to make the trip.

The intra-church warfare, the pressure of lectures, sermons, and writings had almost overwhelmed Cheever, and the visit to England promised an avenue of escape. In May, 1860, Ichabod Washburn, Cheever's wealthy brother-in-law, found it necessary to journey to Europe to purchase some very essential, high-quality, steel rods for his Worcester wire-mills.⁴⁵ He graciously offered the Cheevers free passage both ways, if they would sail with the Washburns on June 13. The Cheevers were delighted, but again Church affairs intervened. Cheever could not be spared just then. The Opposition was getting dangerously strong, and a hasty departure might mean that the minister would be ousted while absent from the country. Following a series of all-night sessions, a new slate of officers, Prudential Committee, Clerk, Treasurer, and Deacons, favorable to Cheever, were declared elected.⁴⁶

It must have been with some misgiving that the Cheevers ascended the gang plank of the *Adriatic* on July 14. Nearly all those who had supported him so faithfully in 1857 and 1858 were now numbered among the opposition. The American press uniformly opposed Cheever's European tour. What would he find when he stepped on English soil?

⁴³ Rev. Henry Batchelor to G. B. C., Glasgow, June 11, 1860.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Johnstone to G. B. C., no date.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Washburn to G. B. C., Worcester, May 14, 1860; Ichabod Washburn to G. B. C., Worcester, June 9, 1860.

⁴⁶ Henry Cheever to Elizabeth Washburn, New York, July 4, 1860.

CHAPTER XIII

THE "BEGGING MISSION"

On the eve of Cheever's departure for Europe, the *Independent* published a leading editorial on the British Aid-Mission. The essence of the article was a denial that slavery was a motivating force in the discontent at Union Square. "The quarrel is entirely upon personal grounds and side issues. Money contributed to the church, as such, would not further the cause of anti-slavery." The *Independent* recommended that the British send a delegation of shrewd business men to investigate affairs before they were too liberal with their money. The paper professed to have no quarrel with Cheever, and advised the British public that Cheever was worthy of personal testimonials, but that they should be entirely divorced from the Church of the Puritans. It repeated its previous assertions that Cheever was only one of many New York anti-slavery preachers, and if he represented himself as the sole standard-bearer he would be guilty of perjury.¹

This article from his own colleagues was an ominous portent. When two hundred sympathizers gathered at the home of the Reverend Dexter Fairbank to bid adieu to the Cheevers, the pastor and E. W. Gilbert denounced the *Independent* for its "bon voyage." Cheever charged that the article was "an ebullition of ill-feeling and false and injurious remarks," in fact, "a compound of bitterness and falsehood."² Actually the editors of the *Independent* had written in a friendly fashion. The truth was too bitter to be swallowed without choking. Slavery was not the sole issue, although it was the root of the quarrels. Miss Johnstone's mission, John Brown, and Thaddeus Hyatt offered reasonable opportunities for differences of opinion among intelligent people. Cheever was so convinced of his righteousness that he could not see the truth. He must not, else the British would repudiate him.³

New charges of complicity with slavery threatened to destroy the Cheever fortunes in Britain. A slaveholder had been a member

¹ *Independent*, July 12, 1860, 4.

² *Ibid.*, July 19, 1860, 4.

³ The *Boston Evening Transcript*, July 25, 1860, commented: "We are glad to see that Dr. Cheever's plan of visiting England in order to obtain funds to support his church is almost universally condemned. . . . The trouble with him is, that he is hopelessly soured and ill-tempered."

of the Church of the Puritans in good standing from 1846 to 1857. The story was repeated by the alleged slaveholder to a reporter of the *New York Observer*, obviously to damage Cheever's reputation. Instantly it was flashed all over the country. Cheever could not ignore the article, and replied that he did not know that the lady in question was a slaveholder till 1857.⁴ The *Independent* defended Cheever's veracity, but it was almost alone in doing so. The *New York Times* and other respectable papers accepted the slaveholding story as truth. O. E. Wood, E. M. Kingsley, H. A. Hurlbut, Charles Abernethy, G. D. Phelps, Rev. Dr. John J. Owen, and W. H. Smith, former Church of the Puritans officials, all publicly testified that they had known of the affair, and asserted that on numerous occasions Cheever had visited the slaveholder to soothe her feelings for any harsh remarks he might have made. These men were now Cheever's enemies, and anxious to unseat him. Cheever denied their allegations.⁵ Who was right? The public could choose, and generally it preferred to believe the worst.

When Cheever arrived at Southampton, he was sick at heart. The future loomed dark and forbidding. Invitations to preach and lecture poured in upon him, but many were cold and perfunctory. Some advised him to limit his lectures to John Bunyan, temperance, or the Protestant Reformation.⁶ Others, such as those from the Edinburgh Ladies Emancipation Society and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, expressed sympathy with his abolitionism. None promised support to the Church of the Puritans. The British clergy was almost wholly aloof. The *London Patriot*, an organ of the British Congregationalists, cordially welcomed Cheever to Britain, and promised to support his anti-slavery lectures, "but we shall be sorry if he comes on a money-begging expedition."⁷ To George Thompson, Cheever confessed his disappointment. The sympathetic abolitionist replied: "I would far rather see you without the cooperation of the ministers

⁴ *Independent*, July 19, 1860, 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ J. Binney to G. B. C., London, July 23, 1860; G. B. Badenock, Secretary of the Scottish Reformation Society, to G. B. C., Edinburgh, August 4, 1860; T. H. Barker, Secretary of the United Kingdom Alliance, to G. B. C., Manchester, August 6, 1860.

⁷ *Independent*, August 16, 1860, 4 (editorial). Quoted from *London Patriot* of July 26, 1860.

and churches here than that you should allow them to place a single fetter on your freedom of speech. I shall not be surprised should you discover that your chief work here is that of putting *our* clergy upon the true ground of abolition.”⁸ For four years Cheever had endeavored to convert the American church to abolition. His only reward had been perpetual controversy. To be forced to repeat the performance in England was too much.

To rest himself before taking up the cudgel, he toured France and Switzerland during July and August.⁹ As special correspondent for the *Evening Post*, Cheever wrote several sympathetic articles about Garibaldi and the unification of Italy then being consummated. With heavy heart he returned to England to promote the financial mission. George Thompson magnanimously offered to become Cheever’s co-laborer, performing the duties of secretary. To Cheever, Thompson confided, “I foresee for you a conflict *here*. Do not shun it.”¹⁰ If Cheever wanted to retain his pastorate, he must face controversy, and persevere in the face of adversity.

The disaffected members of the congregation of the Church of the Puritans, to the significant number of two hundred, signed a protest to the British public against any interference with church affairs. The protest was first communicated to John Campbell, editor of the *British Standard*, who refused to publish it.¹¹ The *London American* had no qualms and printed it in full.¹² The Cheeverites at once drew up a reply which was freely circulated in sympathetic British organs. This was the very inauspicious beginning of a \$50,000 campaign.

In October a group of London pastors, including James Binney, Brock, M. A. Garvey, and John Moreley, organized a committee to present Cheever a “substantial” token for the “noble and consistent” course he had pursued in exhibiting the sinfulness of slavery.¹³ This was comforting, but it was not money for the Church of the Puritans. Cheever was so discouraged that he in-

⁸ George Thompson to G. B. C., Clayton Place, August 7, 1860.

⁹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, Paris, September 22, 1860.

¹⁰ George Thompson to G. B. C., September 22, 1860.

¹¹ M. A. Garvey to G. B. C., London, October 4, 1860.

¹² George Thompson to G. B. C., September 28, 1860; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 20, 1860.

¹³ Revs. Binney, Garvey, and others, to G. B. C., London, October 17, 1860.

formed his New York friends that he contemplated an immediate return to the city, especially since affairs within the church were getting "hotter and hotter."¹⁴ The principal Cheever supporters, Hall, Hartt, Fairbank, and Gilbert, commanded their pastor to remain all winter, if necessary, but that he must not return till the money was raised. Cheever could not ignore this ultimatum, although the only British encouragement he had received was a series of resolutions adopted by the Glasgow New Association for the Abolition of Slavery.¹⁵

When Cheever journeyed to Scotland in November, he discovered a much friendlier atmosphere. The Reverend Henry Batchelor and the Reverend Robert Buchanan, leaders of the free church movement in Glasgow, labored unceasingly in Cheever's behalf. In Edinburgh, Drs. Guthrie and Candlish were equally cooperative. Many successful meetings were held, and large financial testimonials were raised.¹⁶ Lord Kinnaird, wealthy philanthropist, and a Cheever devotee, introduced the American to many of the nobility, who contributed liberally to the Church of the Puritans fund.¹⁷

To his sister Cheever wrote on December 1, 1860: "We are compelled to remain abroad much longer than we anticipated . . . at most there are almost insurmountable obstacles before me, mainly owing to the falsehoods and misrepresentations circulated or endorsed by the *Independent* and eagerly seized upon by the British press. It takes more weeks to answer these calumnies than it does moments to write them and I am amazed at the credit given in this country to the enemies of abolitionism and the slanderers of my church." He reported that he had preached in the Edinburgh churches of nearly all denominations, and had been greeted by

¹⁴ Edward Gilbert to G. B. C., New York, October 17, 1860.

¹⁵ *Principia*, November 10, 1860, 412.

¹⁶ George B. Cheever, *American Slavery, Demonstrations in Favor of Dr. Cheever, in Scotland. Letter of Sympathy from Distinguished Clergymen and Other Gentlemen. Speeches at Meetings in Edinburgh and Glasgow by Drs. Candlish, Guthrie, Alexander, Buchanan, and Smyth. And a Statement of Dr. Cheever's Case by Rev. H. Batchelor. Letter of Dr. Guthrie to the Presbyterian* (New York, 1860).

¹⁷ Lord Kinnaird to George B. —, Esquire, Rossie Priory, November 13, 1860. Lord Kinnaird and G. B. C. carried on a very full correspondence during this period.

large, attentive audiences; but the work of collecting money progressed slowly.

The London Committee to aid Cheever was very reticent to act. M. A. Garvey, the secretary, was an ardent Cheeverite; but he could not persuade the others that they should arrange a public meeting in behalf of the Church of the Puritans, much as some of them admired Cheever's anti-slavery zeal. Garvey hoped that the beginning of the London season, coincident with the opening of Parliament in February would be the propitious moment for Cheever to invade the capital. But the distresses of the "Arctic winter," and the natural sympathy of many British socialites for the South, coupled with conflicting reports about the Church of the Puritans, caused another delay.¹⁸

Meantime, Dr. Campbell, the editor of the *British Standard*, had turned against Cheever.¹⁹ After Cheever's eulogy of W. L. Garrison at a public meeting, Campbell commented: "We must regret that Dr. Cheever should have got into such company. We fear . . . he is the victim of circumstances. He is a man of generous and a noble nature, liable to be led away by the fervor of his benevolence, which conceals from him the true character of his new associates. It is only of late that he went into the Garrison camp."²⁰ That Cheever had truly gone over to the Garrisonians, at least temporarily, was proved by his association with George Thompson, the British Garrisonian, and by his remonstrances with William Goodell, the editor of the *Principia*, an American abolitionist journal, for Goodell's attack upon Gerrit Smith's religion of reason.²¹

The untimely death of the Duke of Sutherland was a real catastrophe for Cheever. The London nobility had laid elaborate plans for a public soiree in Cheever's honor at the Duke's London home at which the admission charge would be one pound. All these preparations were necessarily abandoned.²²

The international situation redounded to Cheever's disadvantage. The New York clergyman had never been keen about the Republican party because of its mild slavery policy. Yet Cheever

¹⁸ M. A. Garvey to G. B. C., London, January 19, 1861.

¹⁹ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 22, 1860.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ William Goodell to G. B. C., New York, October 13, 1860.

²² *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 20, 1861.

was gratified by Lincoln's election, regarding it as the first step toward emancipation.²³ Cheever believed whole-heartedly in the integrity of the Union; and wasted no sympathy on those Americans who patted the seceding States on the back and said, "Wayward sisters depart in peace."²⁴ The inactivity of the timid Buchanan disgusted Cheever. The Crittenden Amendments seriously alarmed him. He did not know that they were repudiated by the Republicans, or that the South desired nothing less than complete independence. Even if the Middle West voted with the South to perpetuate slavery, he prayed that Northern New England would not be led astray.²⁵ In February, 1861, Cheever wailed: "Will the North never be firm, never assert the right of freedom against liberty?"²⁶

All during the spring, Lord Kinnaird and M. A. Garvey prepared for a great public meeting to be held in the West End of London at which the renowned Lord Brougham would preside.²⁷ Just when the final details had been completed, the Confederates opened fire on Fort Sumter, and Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand volunteers. Lord Brougham, as a member of Parliament, now declined to have any connection with the American abolitionist.²⁸

The British Proclamation of Neutrality, issued on May 13, 1861, was a distinct advantage to the Union; but was not so interpreted by the Northerners who regarded it as an unfriendly act. The British upper-class felt a greater community of interest with the Southern cavaliers than the Northern rabble. King Cotton seemed to bind the Confederacy securely to England. The British liberals, upon whose support Cheever depended, could see very little distinction between Southern nationalism and its European counterpart.²⁹ The official pronouncements of Lincoln and Seward

²³ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, Rossie Priory, Scotland, December 1, 1860.

²⁴ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, Edinburgh, January 13, 1861.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ G. B. C. to Ichabod Washburn, Edinburgh, February 7, 1861.

²⁷ Lord Kinnaird to G. B. C., February 14, 1861; M. A. Garvey to G. B. C., London, February 23, 1861.

²⁸ Lord Kinnaird to G. B. C., April 29 and May 20, 1861.

²⁹ H. D. Jordan and E. J. Pratt, *Europe and the American Civil War* (Boston, 1931), 1-130.

that abolition of slavery was not a war aim confounded them. More than ever the liberals looked upon Cheever as a false prophet.

Although Cheever was unsuccessful in raising large sums of money, he remained very active. Lecturing in large cities and small towns, day and night, he sought to enlighten the British as to the true state of the abolitionist cause in America. He was the means whereby several petitions were forwarded to Parliament urging a non-recognition of the Confederacy.³⁰

Cheever did not always satisfy his audiences. His denunciations of the British press for its failure to devote a greater proportion of space to the rights of the enslaved negroes were not in good taste, and angered many people. The natives of Birmingham were not cordial because the American tariff had adversely affected the manufacturing industries of the city.³¹ The London Committee voted to suspend operations on May 29, but promised to promote Cheever's cause by private subscription.

William Wilson, a Mansfield clergyman, blamed Cheever himself for a great deal of the apathy and hostility. He frankly asserted that the abolitionist was shocking the British public with his denunciations of prominent Britishers simply because they did not agree on slavery or foreign policy. Cheever had quarreled with Chamerovzov, the secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Wilson urged Cheever to patch up the relationships and asserted that it could be easily accomplished if Cheever would be more patient. He also recommended that Cheever abandon his policy of discussing personalities, and confine himself to the enormities of American slavery.³² Wilson was Cheever's firm friend and had devoted many hours in Cheever's behalf. It was the old story all over again. Cheever could not recognize an honest difference of opinion.

At this point events in New York City confused the picture. The struggle inside the Church of the Puritans had been continuous since Cheever's embarkation for Europe. Both factions had forwarded statements of their respective cases to the British journals.

³⁰ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, Edinburgh, May 17, 1861.

³¹ ——— to Eliza Wigham, Birmingham, May 19, 1861. Miss Wigham was the leading member of the Edinburgh Ladies Emancipation Society and an indefatigable worker in Cheever's behalf. On many occasions she acted as Cheever's lecture agent.

³² William Wilson to G. B. C., Mansfield, June 6, 1861.

The litigation concerning the disputed election of trustees and attempts of the opposition to break up the prayer and social meetings of the majority added to the flames of hate. To protect the slim margin of control, the Prudential Committee adopted the unusual policy of requiring all new candidates for church membership to swear loyalty to Cheever and the British-Aid mission.³³ Among the applicants thus excluded was the wife of Willard Harvey.³⁴ In January, 1861, the Cheeverites voted to strike off the record of church membership all those who had not been regular attendants for a year, thereby reducing the number of malcontents to one-third of the total church membership.³⁵ In the same month the opposition started court proceedings to oust those trustees who were alleged to have been illegally elected in March of 1860. Miss Johnstone, the emissary to Britain, deserted the Cheever ranks, and offered public testimony detrimental to George Cheever.³⁶ The question of church dismissals arose to disturb the majority. Seth B. Hunt and family requested a letter. Gilbert and Hartt urged disciplinary action. Others feared another *ex-parte* council, and demurred.³⁷ In February Deacon White began attending the Broadway Tabernacle, and William Herries, another pillar of the church, abandoned the Cheever ranks.³⁸

It was also in February that the majority received its first intimations of the failure of Cheever's mission. Gilbert was alarmed about the effect this news would have on the drooping spirits and empty pocketbooks of the faithful.³⁹ At the initiative of several of Cheever's friends, a compromise between the warring factions was attempted. It collapsed when the opposition, sensing that the strength of the Cheeverites was waning and that final victory was at hand, demanded Cheever's immediate resignation, and the "full confession" of his supporters for the "sin" of sustaining such a reprobate.⁴⁰

On March 22 at a regular business session, Chester, Ball,

³³ William Herries to G. B. C., New York, November 14, 1860.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Edward Gilbert to G. B. C., New York, January 14, 1861.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Dexter Fairbank to G. B. C., New York, January 23, 1861.

³⁸ Henry A. Hartt to G. B. C., New York, February 9, 1861.

³⁹ Edward Gilbert to G. B. C., New York, February 13, 1861.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Harvey, White, Hunt, Blackmer, and B. K. Phelps requested the majority for a mutual council to consider church policy and Cheever's qualifications as a pastor.⁴¹ Not only did the majority spurn the request, they even went so far as to suspend six of the opposition ringleaders.⁴² One member who wrote abusive letters to the clerk, Gilbert, was excommunicated.⁴³ During April Cheever was besieged with letters from Davis and Gilbert urging him to collect the money quickly and return home. The majority in New York could not properly comprehend the difficulties which Cheever had encountered.

The suspended members of the Union Square Church were not easily silenced. They immediately issued an invitation, signed by seventy persons, to sister Congregational churches to attend an *ex-parte* council in New York City on May 2, 1861. In answer to this call, sixteen out of twenty-nine churches sent representatives to the Council. Declining to discuss Cheever as a pastor, the Council limited itself to a consideration of the British-Aid mission and church action subsequent to Cheever's departure. The unanimous decision of the Council favored the opposition; and though its conclusions were only advisory, it recommended that the Congregational churches withdraw fellowship from the Puritan Church "until it shall recede from its present position and give evidence of a return to the spirit of Christ, and to the order of the Congregational churches." The Council could not reinstate the aggrieved members to regular standing in the Church of the Puritans but it did pronounce them as "worthy members of the Church of Christ" fit for the fellowship of any Christian Church with which they might wish to unite.⁴⁴

Edward Gilbert drafted a reply to the Council's conclusions, asserting once again that the whole struggle originated from Cheever's anti-slavery preaching, and that if the Church had not acted as it did, he would have been driven from his pulpit. However accurate this statement was, the action which the church took was hardly according to accepted Congregational usage. The ma-

⁴¹ Letter presented to the Church of the Puritans on March 22, 1861, mss.

⁴² Edward Gilbert to G. B. C., New York, March 23, 1861.

⁴³ S. R. Davis to G. B. C., New York, March 29, 1861.

⁴⁴ *Independent*, May 16, 1861; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 25, 1861; *Principia*, June 22 and 29, 1861.

jority evidently felt that unusual circumstances justified unusual methods. There can be no doubt that Cheever's followers believed that to fail him would be an irretrievable blow to abolitionism. Cheever's pulpit was saved, but it was a far cry from the glorious Church of the Puritans of 1850. Perhaps Cheever would have fared better had he resigned his pastorate and devoted himself exclusively to abolition lectures.

The press reaction to the *ex-parte* council was almost wholly unfavorable to Cheever. The *Independent* and *Congregationalist* supported the Council, and the latter urged Congregational churches to repudiate the Church of the Puritans.⁴⁵ Horace Greeley, who had supported Cheever during the 1859 *ex-parte* council, again rose to his defense, charging that Thompson and Bacon, the *Independent* editors, were in active league with the wealthy minority at Union Square.⁴⁶ It was well known that Bacon was the Council's guiding light. Oliver Johnson in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* charged that Cheever's opponents had definitely planned to install Bacon at Union Square if Cheever had been ousted.⁴⁷ William Goodell in the *Principia* accused Thompson and Bacon of actively plotting with a few rich men to hi-jack a church majority. He also charged that Cheever's abolitionist zeal had fomented the crisis, and that Thompson and Bacon, as mild anti-slavery preachers, really loathed Cheever.⁴⁸ But the cries of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and the *Principia* were feeble when compared to the trumpet blasts of the great metropolitan dailies and weeklies.

The proceedings and results of the *ex-parte* council were fully reported in the British press. There was a revulsion of public sentiment. Was Cheever really a humbug, or was he the innocent victim of a dark and traitorous plot? No one seemed really to know. M. A. Garvey and Lord Kinnaid continued to labor faithfully for a London meeting, but it was difficult to arouse any enthusiasm. Indignantly Cheever wrote to his sister: "In England we meet with almost nothing but empty compliments or ill-concealed impatience and refusal of aid." He confessed that the race of "doughfaces" was even "more prolific and abundant" in Britain than in America. "Bad as the clergy of the United States have been

⁴⁵ *Independent*, June 13, 1861, 4-5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 25, 1861.

⁴⁸ *Principia*, June 29, 1861, 673-676.

in their compliance with slavery" the ministers of Britain outdid them in "sycophancy, time-serving, and the betrayal of the cause of the enslaved."⁴⁹ Cheever should not have expected that British ministers would be as concerned about an American institution as they would have been about a domestic one.

While Cheever was awaiting new London developments, he visited Ireland where his anti-slavery addresses were favorably received. Richard D. Webb, the European correspondent of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, attended a Cheever lecture in Dublin, and reported that Cheever denounced "time-serving" ministers very forcefully and that he gave the Garrisonian abolitionists full credit for their efforts in the slave's behalf. By faint praise, he criticized Cheever's address: "He is *seen* to more advantage in his books than in the pulpit or on the platform, owing to his habit of reading his addresses. Great skill is required to carry an audience out of themselves by reading a written essay."⁵⁰ Cheever was never a good reader, and it is doubtful if he was up to par in Dublin. After all the preliminary arrangements for his Irish appearances had been made, Cheever decided to cancel the journey. Only the urgent pleas of Alexander King,⁵¹ "to dash our plans in this way would be ruinous to your character and unwise and an unpardonable sin to the anti-slavery cause" caused Cheever to reconsider, and appear as scheduled.⁵²

Just prior to his embarkation for the United States aboard the *Persia* on August 13, 1861, the long-awaited testimonial meeting at London was held at Willis' Room, St. James. Lord Shaftesbury presented Cheever with a silver salver weighing eighty-four ounces, and a sum of money. The inscription on the silver plate read:

Presented to the Rev. G. B. Cheever, D.D., pastor of the Church of the Puritans, New York, in token of the honor in which he is held by the British Christians, and of their sympathy with him in the noble and consistent course he has pursued in exhibiting slave-holding as a sin against God, and a violation of the first rights of humanity.

⁴⁹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, June 21, 1861.

⁵⁰ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, August 17, 1861.

⁵¹ The same Alexander King whom Cheever had eulogized at the great meeting in the Church of the Puritans in December, 1848, just prior to King's departure as a missionary to Ireland.

⁵² Alexander King to G. B. C., Dublin, June 28, 1861.

The names of the donors, which were inscribed on the plate, included several Lords, ministers and members of Parliament. This was the sum total of the London effort from which Cheever had expected so much.

The British-Aid Mission was a failure in that the enormous sums which Cheever's followers envisioned were not approached. The exact amount received is a matter of speculation—probably between five and ten thousand dollars. Had fifty thousand been raised it would not have saved the Church of the Puritans, which was built on leased ground. As New York City expanded, property values rose sharply and the owners had already decided that the existing lease, expiring in 1867, would not be renewed. The sum realized, however, was sufficient to keep the church functioning through the hectic days of the Civil War till Cheever's dream of freedom for the negroes was written into the American Constitution.

In Britain Cheever enjoyed the distinction of being the most widely-known American abolitionist during the early years of the war.⁵³ He had fought against British recognition of the Confederacy, and had pleaded for a better understanding between the British and the North. He realized that Lincoln's policy of delayed emancipation confused the British who could see no justification for the war unless the North was fighting to free the slaves. Though Cheever and his audiences often disagreed violently, he was invariably assured of a large gathering. As a financial venture his journey was a failure. As a good-will tour, it may have promoted better Anglo-American relationships, although Cheever had been a personal storm-center.

⁵³ Jordan and Pratt, *Europe and Civil War*, 127.

CHAPTER XIV

GADFLY OF LINCOLN

The failure of the Union army to achieve a smashing victory at Bull Run disillusioned George Cheever.¹ He had correctly observed that a large segment of the British public was disgusted with the North for its failure to proclaim the emancipation of the slaves as a war aim. He now feared that the Union defeat would convince the British government that the South could not be subdued, and would culminate in official recognition of the Confederacy's independence. Cheever resolved to do all in his power to prevent such a catastrophe. Through lectures, sermons, and editorials he sought to goad the Lincoln administration into action. "Unless we speedily proclaim war against slavery, we are in danger, through the recognition of the Slave Confederacy, of being plunged into war also with Europe"² was the clarion call repeatedly sounded by the New York minister.

Cheever was seized with the obsession that an Emancipation Proclamation would insure a speedy collapse of the Confederacy. "Strike down slavery, cut off the power of the slaveholders, which resides only in slavery, and we cut the whole non-slaveholding South from their subjection to the slave-oligarchy and the rebellion is instantly broken. Strike down slavery, and the whole object of the rebellion is taken away, and the whole South will be peacefully subdued without another blow."³ Cheever did not comprehend the stranglehold which the "cavaliers" maintained over Southern politics. He underestimated the South's military strength and its confidence in ultimate victory. His greatest error was his misjudgment of Southern psychology. Much as the poor-whites resented the domination of the slavocracy, they hated the negroes even worse. Emancipation, at an early hour, rather than dividing the South, would have solidified it to an even greater degree. Nor could Cheever appreciate the very intricate and ticklish problem of the slave-holding loyalists of the border states. Immediate emancipation probably would have thrown these states, already torn with civil strife, into the ranks of the Confederacy. Without

¹ *Independent*, August 21, 1861, 1.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

inquiring deeply into the practicableness of speedy emancipation, Cheever agitated for it, even to the extent of becoming a very bitter critic of Abraham Lincoln.

Cheever had arrived in New York City from Europe on August 13, 1861.⁴ Feeling the need of additional rest before resuming his pastoral duties, he journeyed to Worcester, Massachusetts, to visit the Washburns. Through the columns of the *Independent*, he continued to plead for a more positive government policy regarding slavery. With the approval of the officials of the Church Anti-Slavery Society, Cheever discussed with the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society the advisability of a convention of "pronounced abolitionists" to press upon the President his duty regarding slavery. After several conferences, Garrison, who hesitated to embarrass the administration, vetoed the plan as a step calculated to hinder rather than promote the progress of the war.⁵ For once the abolitionist preacher was outstripping Garrison in his radicalism.

When Cheever returned to the Church of the Puritans in September, he was tendered a public reception at the home of the Reverend S. R. Davis, which James Gordon Bennett labelled as an "abolition lovefeast."⁶ Several hundred admiring friends were present. Among the speakers were Dr. S. H. Tyng, rector of the St. George's Episcopal Church, Dr. Henry A. Hartt, Theodore Tilton of the *Independent*, Oliver Johnson of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the Reverend S. S. Jocelyn, William Goodell of the *Principia*, and George Cheever.⁷ Immediate emancipation was the keynote of the addresses. Cheever predicted that the Lincoln administration and the United States would sink to inglorious dissolution and oblivion unless the claims of the enslaved became the primary concern of the Government's war effort.⁸

Week after week on Sunday evenings, the Church of the Puritans was crowded by those anxious to hear Cheever's appeals for Government action. Gerrit Smith, William Lloyd Garrison,⁹ Parker Pillsbury, Oliver Johnson, William Goodell and other prom-

⁴ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, August 27, 1861.

⁵ W. L. Garrison to Henry Cheever, Boston, September 9, 1861.

⁶ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, September 28, 1861.

⁷ *Ibid.*, September 21, 1861.

⁸ *Ibid.*, September 28, 1861.

⁹ Garrison and Garrison, *W. L. Garrison*, IV, 37.

inent abolitionists were often seen in the audience. Cheever's feelings on emancipation were so strong that he could not refrain from frequent defamatory references to the President of the United States. James Gordon Bennett was so angered by Cheever's lectures that he suggested that the last obstacle to national unity would not be removed until Cheever and his kind, Beecher, Greeley, Garrison, and Raymond, were placed under lock and key.¹⁰

For the first time in his life, Cheever experienced great difficulty in securing sympathetic publicity for his sermons. The findings of the *ex-parte* council and Cheever's stand on the war had alienated many of the journals. Although Cheever did not relinquish his weekly correspondence for the *Independent* until 1862, his sermons were excluded as early as November, 1861.¹¹ The *Tribune*, at first, was willing to print them if they were carefully edited, and all objectionable material removed. Finally Cheever's sermons were debarred entirely, unless the newspaper received considerable financial remuneration.¹² After the fall of 1861 the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* published no full accounts of Cheever's discourses, although it continued to treat Cheever in a kindly spirit. Only the *Principia*, a minor abolition paper, remained wholly loyal. In 1863, when it seemed as though this journal would fail for lack of funds, Cheever purchased a large amount of stock and became president of the corporation which edited the paper.¹³ Until the end of the war, the *Principia* served as Cheever's organ. With only a small circulation its influence was infinitesimal when compared to that of the *Independent*. Yet in one sense Cheever was not wholly dependent upon any one newspaper. From his pulpit at Union Square, from the rostrum of Cooper Institute, the Tremont Temple in Boston, the House of Representatives in Washington, and numerous other platforms throughout the North, he reached the ears of thousands with his pleas for emancipation and negro rights.

At the request of the Reverend Jacob M. Manning,¹⁴ associate pastor of Boston's Old South Church, an exchange of pulpits

¹⁰ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 29, 1861.

¹¹ G. B. C., to Elizabeth Washburn, New York, November 12, 1861.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Principia* Association to G. B. C., June 30, 1863.

¹⁴ J. M. Manning to G. B. C., Boston, November 30, 1861.

was effected on December 15, 1861. This afforded Cheever an opportunity to address one of Boston's most fashionable congregations (for years radical abolitionists had been excluded from Congregational pulpits in New England) as well as a public meeting at Tremont Temple. Cheever's Temple address from the text "And Pharaoh's servants said unto him: How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the man go that they may serve the Lord their God. Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" was a great triumph.¹⁵ As usual it constituted an energetic appeal for negro rights and a powerful indictment of the Lincoln program.

From the beginning Cheever had supported General Fremont's unauthorized proclamation of emancipation in Missouri. "As fast as the army advanced, so fast and so far the slaves would be put under protective arrangement and rules, a system of continued employment and care, drafted and regimented for service or if kept on plantations,"¹⁶ kept at work as free laborers, the plantations being the property of the Government. Cheever hoped that under such a system of Government management the Union would be able to retain the cotton trade with Britain, and prevent that country from developing new sources of supply.

In November, 1861, Cheever, specifically referring to Lincoln, was branding those men as traitors who had replaced Fremont with Halleck as Commander of the Army of the West, and forbade Union armies to free the slaves. The minister, an advocate of Congressional reconstruction, also regarded as traitors, Government officials who promised to accept the Southern rebels back into the Union without interference.¹⁷ Cheever was one of the sponsors of the mass meeting at Cooper Institute on November 27 when Charles Sumner lauded Fremont and his policies.¹⁸

In early January, 1862, Cheever received an invitation from Owen Lovejoy, George W. Julian, Roscoe Conkling, Thaddeus Stevens and other Congressmen to preach in the House of Representatives at Washington.¹⁹ So impressive was Cheever's denun-

¹⁵ From an undated newspaper clipping, summarizing Cheever's address at Tremont Temple on December 15, 1861. MSS. at American Anti-quarian Society.

¹⁶ *Independent*, September 19, 1861, 1.

¹⁷ *Independent*, November 7, 1861, 1.

¹⁸ *Principia*, November 7, 1861, 860.

¹⁹ Roscoe Conkling, Owen Lovejoy and others to G. B. C., Washington, D. C., January 9, 1862.

ciation of the administration, that thirty Representatives and Senators including the above and Charles Sumner, David Wilmot, Henry Wilson and others immediately extended Cheever an invitation to lecture on several Sabbaths during the winter season.²⁰ John B. Geyser, a private in the Engineers, heard Cheever's sermon, and wrote that once he was filled with hatred for the abolitionists but was now a convert agreeing with Cheever "that the salvation of the country depends on the adoption by government of a sweeping emancipation policy" as the only means of "ending what promises to be a long and fruitless war."²¹

In February Cheever returned to Washington to deliver his second address before a lecture association at the Smithsonian Institute,²² another sermon in the halls of Congress, and a lecture in the Unitarian Church.²³ The Washington correspondent of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* commented: "It is strong proof of the feeling here upon the subject that so radical an anti-slavery man as Dr. Cheever can draw a full house the second time when the conditions of admittance require a fee. I need not say that the Doctor did not hide any portion of the truth. Like his sermon at the Capitol, a week ago, it was remarkable for its bold eloquence."²⁴ On many occasions during the war, Cheever was invited to the seat of government to "enlighten" the Lincoln administration as to the best course of action regarding the negroes and the war.²⁵

²⁰ Senators and Congressmen to G. B. C., Washington, January 14, 1862.

²¹ John B. Geyser to G. B. C., Washington, January 15, 1862.

²² W. A. Crofutt, Secretary of the Washington Lecture Association, to G. B. C., Washington, November 25, 1861, March 5, 1862.

²³ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 17, 1862. In March Parker Pillsbury on his own initiative advanced Cheever the sum of \$100 from the "Hovey Fund" to enable Cheever to speak in areas where, otherwise, he could not afford to go. Parker Pillsbury to G. B. C., Boston, March 11, 1862. In September, Gerrit Smith, as one of Cheever's "parishioners" sent \$20 toward Cheever's support. Henry Cheever to Elizabeth Washburn, Worcester, September 15, 1862.

²⁴ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 17, 1862.

²⁵ George W. Julian, *Political Recollections, 1840 to 1872* (Chicago, 1884), 370, said in regard to the meetings in the House of Representatives: "The crowds in attendance filled every part of the floor and galleries, and were full of enthusiasm. The most terrific arraignment of slavery I ever listened to was by Rev. George B. Cheever in the course of these series.

In January Cheever joined William Cullen Bryant of the *Evening Post*, William Goodell, Theodore Tilton, Oliver Johnson and twenty-two others in drafting a petition to Congress which reaffirmed belief in the principles of the Declaration of Independence, asserted that the South's secession had released the North from any obligation to protect slavery, and recommended that the Union should not be restored until "slavery shall be wiped out of the land utterly and forever."²⁶ Cheever was determined to do everything within his power to convince Lincoln that without a proclamation of emancipation the Civil War would be fruitless.

In February Cheever lectured before the Pennsylvania Legislature at Harrisburg.²⁷ He also lectured in Philadelphia under the auspices of a Sunday School²⁸ and in Chester²⁹ at the invitation of a Y. M. C. A. Continuing on to Washington, he scored another triumph at the House of Representatives, to the great joy of the Radical Congressmen.³⁰ In March, Cheever visited Manchester, New Hampshire, Albany and Rochester,³¹ New York, and Trenton, New Jersey. In Albany he addressed the Military Affairs Committee of New York as well as the general public. His Trenton engagement was at the specific request of individuals who were anxious to have abolitionism defended from the devastating charges which Amos Kendall had recently directed against abolitionists at Trenton. It also afforded Cheever an opportunity to address the New Jersey legislature.³²

He was a man of great ability, unquenchable zeal, fervid eloquence, and an Old Testament Christian who was sometimes called the Prophet Isaiah of the anti-slavery cause. He carried his religion courageously into politics, and while arraigning slavery as the grand rebel, he also severely criticized the management of the war and the Border State policy of the President."

²⁶ *Independent*, January 16, 1862, 3.

²⁷ G. S. Berry to G. B. C., Harrisburg, January 13, 1862; January 25, 1862.

²⁸ John B. Dales to G. B. C., Philadelphia, January 29, 1862.

²⁹ John Cochran to G. B. C., Chester, January 31, 1862.

³⁰ Elizabeth Washburn to G. B. C., Worcester, February 17, 1862.

³¹ After Cheever's Rochester engagement, Frederick Douglas, the ex-slave and outstanding champion of negro rights, wrote: "Your services to the cause of my enslaved people have made your life very precious in my eyes. I follow you everywhere with devout gratitude that one so able, clear-sighted, brave, and uncompromising should rise up . . . to speak the true word without any admixture of the spurious doctrines of expediency." Frederick Douglas to G. B. C., Rochester, April 5, 1862.

³² Frederick Kingman to G. B. C., Trenton, March 5, 1862.

At the anniversary sessions of the American Anti-Slavery Society in May, Cheever hailed the emancipation of slaves in the District of Columbia as "the greatest of our victories thus far. It is the knocking away of the first block for the launch of national freedom."³³ To him it was worth all the expense and misery of the rebellion up to that time. As usual he violently disagreed with those who maintained that it was unpatriotic to discuss "war aims" in the midst of conflict. The winning of the war was essential, but freedom for the slaves was all important; and it must be as a humanitarian measure else its "moral grandeur" would be lost.³⁴

Cheever had no sympathy for Andrew Johnson's military regime in Tennessee.³⁵ He considered all of the war governor's acts as unconstitutional because they were unauthorized by Congress.³⁶ A consistent exponent of Congressional reconstruction, he denounced Lincoln's orders to the military governor of North Carolina to execute and enforce the existing slave codes. Especially concerned about the enforcement of laws which denied an education to the negro children in occupied areas, Cheever could see little distinction between the despotism of the slavocracy and that of a northern military regime.³⁷

Cheever's intensive activities of the spring culminated in another break-down in health, and during the summer and fall he rested at Saratoga Springs and Newport, Rhode Island.³⁸ President Lincoln's open letter of August 22, 1862, to Horace Greeley, in which the President boldly reiterated that the preservation of the Union was the paramount issue of the war, and that slavery was

³³ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 10, 1862.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ G. B. C. to Charles Sumner, New York, February 22, 1862, and March 5, 1862. On the latter date he wrote: "It is a vast and dreadful step towards a military despotism, and if Congress submit to it, they are reduced from the position of a coordinate branch of the United States Government to the condition of a mere registering French clock, or parliamentary machine for recording the decrees, and sanctioning the movements, of the President and the military power. . . ."

³⁶ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 26, 1862. J. G. Bennett's comment was: "Constitutional Cheever: He ought to be supplied with a comfortable home at national expense in the smallest cell of the lowest tier of Fort Lafayette for the rest of his life, already unconstitutionally long."
Ibid.

³⁷ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, New York, June 3, 1862.

³⁸ Edward Gilbert to G. B. C., New York, August 27, 1862.

only incidental, must have struck a discordant note in Cheever's mind. Close on the heels of the battle of Antietam, Lincoln issued his preliminary proclamation of emancipation. The relentless pressure of the abolitionists and the need for a better understanding between the North and the British public were factors inducing Lincoln to act.³⁹ Although this preliminary proclamation was a far cry from a purely abolitionist document, it was a step in the right direction. George Cheever was plainly disgusted. He had hoped that Lincoln, at one swift stroke, would cleave the bonds of slavery. In disgust, he penned a letter of protest to the President. William H. Channing, the pastor of the Unitarian Church in Washington, read the letter and remarked: "It certainly is a most lucid, powerful convincing statement of your view; and though it probably is too late to induce him to make a radical change of his policy, it may lead to important modifications, and may prepare the way for future action."⁴⁰ Cheever would have been satisfied with only complete and immediate emancipation.

During the fall Cheever hammered away at the President for his failure to proclaim emancipation under the Constitution. The minister repeatedly affirmed that the Constitution, correctly interpreted, did not sanction slavery, and that Lincoln's use of the war power as the means of abolition was both unnecessary and immoral.⁴¹ In December, Cheever toured central and western Massachusetts, seeking to arouse anti-slavery enthusiasm. The response was disappointing. "The people are wide asleep and like men

³⁹ J. G. Randall, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 1937), 487.

⁴⁰ William H. Channing to G. B. C., Washington, D. C., November 25, 1862. Channing was pastor of the Unitarian church, and during 1863-1864 served as chaplain of the House of Representatives. During the course of the war, he and Cheever frequently corresponded concerning matters of national importance. See Harris E. Starr, "William Henry Channing," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1930), IV, 9-10.

⁴¹ W. L. Garrison once referred to Cheever's views of the Constitution: "After tea I went with Oliver Johnson and Wendell Phillips, and Phoebe Carey, to Dr. Cheever's church. . . . The assembly was very large, and the Dr. earnest as usual but his discourse was a hair-splitting defence of the anti-slavery character of the Constitution, and to me excessively tedious and wonderfully absurd, in view of the history of this nation. . . ." W. L. Garrison to Helen E. Garrison, New York, October 21, 1861. Garrison Papers, Public Library, Boston, Mass.

walking in a dream, muttering and helpless, and what is worse, unwilling and even angry if you strive to wake them up.”⁴² Nevertheless Cheever persisted in his endeavors to enlighten the populace concerning the follies of the Lincoln administration. For a while, Cheever was gravely alarmed that Lincoln would not issue the promised Proclamation of Emancipation. Bad as it was, Cheever preferred it to nothing at all. After January 1, 1863, Cheever continued to voice his opposition, clamoring for unrestricted emancipation, and denouncing the administration for its lenient reconstruction policy and its liberal treatment of the loyal border states in which slavery was still extant.

Cheever's addresses of 1863 were similar to those of the earlier period, with perhaps a greater emphasis upon negro rights. At the Boston⁴³ and New York anniversaries in May, he was the principal speaker before the Church Anti-Slavery Society. The sessions of the American Anti-Slavery Society were held in the Church of the Puritans, but the minister did not take a prominent part in the proceedings.⁴⁴ In June Cheever spent several weeks in the west, lecturing in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Everywhere he was greeted by tremendous crowds and great enthusiasm.⁴⁵ The rebel invasion of the North was in full swing, and the people were anxious to learn Cheever's views concerning the best course of action. At Ann Arbor, Michigan, Cheever was the guest of his friend, Henry Tappan, the President of the University of Michigan.⁴⁶

Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania was hailed by Cheever as a tonic to the North. He considered Lee to be the best recruiting officer that President Lincoln ever had in the field. As the rebels penetrated deeper, Cheever expressed the opinion that it might no longer be necessary to resort to conscription, and that even the

⁴² G. B. C. to his wife, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, December 10, 1862; Worcester, December 4, 1862.

⁴³ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 6, 1863. The Boston correspondent labelled it a "characteristic" speech in defense of negro rights closed by an energetic plea for freedom of speech in war time—"a right, that for his own part he would never relinquish."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, May 16, 1863.

⁴⁵ G. B. C. to his wife, Adrian, Michigan, June 14, 1863. "I meet unexpected friends and acquaintances at every step, and a very cordial and hearty reception and attentive hearing everywhere. . . ."

⁴⁶ G. B. C. to his wife, Ann Arbor, Michigan, June 17, 1863.

"Copperheads" might be converted into war volunteers.⁴⁷ Much as Cheever might criticize the Lincoln government, he was no "copperhead." His quarrel with the government was not induced by pro-Southern sympathies. Rather its foundation lay in Cheever's belief in forceful prosecution of the war and an uncompromising policy regarding slavery and the slavocracy.

The great victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg were hailed with delight by Cheever as by every loyal Northerner.⁴⁸ Yet even in the hour of joy, Cheever did not forget the negro. He expressed grave doubts whether the Government would take full advantage of its opportunities.⁴⁹ He still feared that Lincoln would offer the South a compromise. Nothing short of the complete subjugation of the South, the annihilation of its ruling class, and the elevation and enlightenment of the negro would satisfy Cheever.

The minister was in New York City when the draft riots broke out in July. For four days the city was in the hands of the mob. Negroes and abolitionists were the particular objects of the mob's fury. As a prominent abolitionist and advocate of negro rights, Cheever felt unsafe in a city given over to the atrocities of the "wild Irish," and fled for his life to the country.⁵⁰

To his sister, Cheever unburdened his heart: "The blood of the Irish seems set on fire against the poor blacks." He was dismayed that the guilty were not apprehended, and that in many quarters hatred for the negroes was encouraged. The decision of the "avenue railroad" to exclude negro passengers appalled him. He rejoiced that many families had resolved to dismiss their Irish servants, as a gesture of sympathy for the blacks. Rather strangely, Cheever viewed the anarchy and rioting as God's retribution upon a "people that will not do justice." Cheever believed that the Government would continue to be unpopular and suffer reverses until it granted negroes their full rights as citizens. In the full flush of the recent victories, Cheever cried out:

Our government seems blasted with the spirit of indecision and delay; half-measures, and a tardy and reluctant and timid array

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, New York, July 7, 1863.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, Saratoga Springs, August 5, 1863.

of half our forces; and all the while slavery protected to the last hour. God have mercy on our distracted nation. . . .⁵¹

The draft riots were particularly disastrous to the fortune of the radical abolition journal, the *Principia*. Being devoted to the negroes' cause, many of its subscribers were recruited from the negro ranks. During the course of the riots many negroes fled or went into hiding, and the *Principia* came to the verge of bankruptcy. Appealing to Secretary Salmon Chase for \$1000 of secret service money, Cheever at least received Chase's "good offices." Chase urged Jay Cooke, the financier of the Civil War, with whom Chase, as Secretary of the Treasury, was very intimate, and Hiram Barney, the collector of the Port of New York, to contribute to the *Principia* fund. Cooke forwarded a liberal sum, but Barney, much to Chase's surprise, did not respond favorably, although there is a possibility that, at Chase's further prompting, he may have done so.⁵² Perhaps there was an advancement of secret service funds.⁵³ Anyway, the *Principia* was enabled to continue publication.

Throughout the fall and winter of 1863-1864, Cheever attacked the Government for its apathy regarding the enslaved. In late May, 1864, Cheever journeyed to Washington for another sermon before the House of Representatives. While in the city, he visited Salmon Chase, and after an hour and a half of conversation, reported, "He [the Secretary] has become quite thoroughly radical in the best way."⁵⁴

Although Cheever's Washington visit gave him the impression that the officialdom confidently awaited Lincoln's re-election, the New York minister continued to labor against the President's renomination and re-election. The regular Republican convention was scheduled to assemble at Baltimore on June 7. As a prelude to this convention the radical abolitionists and certain disaffected elements, especially the German Republicans of the West, gathered at Cleveland on May 31 to serve notice on the Republican party

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Salmon P. Chase to Edward Gilbert, Washington, October 17, 1863.

⁵³ Henry T. Cheever to G. B. C., Worcester, June 8, 1864. H. T. C. requested G. B. C. to pull some strings with officials to get some secret service money. Tone of letter definitely suggests that G. B. C. had previously obtained secret service funds.

⁵⁴ G. B. C. to his wife, Washington, D. C., May 31, 1864.

that Lincoln must not be chosen as the standard-bearer.⁵⁵ The centers of this movement, whose real object was to promote the candidacy of John C. Fremont, were New York City and St. Louis.

George Cheever, as one of Lincoln's bitterest critics, had enthusiastically endorsed this "Mugwump" convention, and his name had appeared at the head of a column of sponsors who called the meeting. Nicolay and Hay had ridiculed Cheever because he was the Easterner who had shouted most lustily about the convention, and then failed to attend the sessions. Perhaps Secretary Chase, who previously had entertained designs upon the Republican nomination, persuaded Cheever to stay away. Edward Gilbert of the Church of the Puritans was temporary chairman of the convention,⁵⁶ and Henry Cheever attended as a delegate.⁵⁷ Although absent, George Cheever approved the nomination of Fremont and the resolutions which were adopted. Some of these, including preservation of the Union, obedience to the Constitution, complete victory for Union arms, right of free speech, and habeas corpus in all areas except those under martial law,⁵⁸ strict enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine, Congressional reconstruction, and the confiscation of rebel land and its distribution to soldiers and settlers⁵⁹ had often been advocated by George B. Cheever.

At a ratification meeting held in Cooper Institute, many of Cheever's lieutenants at Union Square were elected to prominent positions. Edward Gilbert, Cheever's chief henchman, presided; and the Reverend S. R. Davis, Dr. H. A. Hartt, William Demorest, and O. H. Plumb, were chosen vice presidents.⁶⁰ Both Henry and George Cheever actively promoted the interests of the "new party." They unsuccessfully sought to enlist Oliver Johnson, the editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, who hitherto had been a bulwark of Cheever strength. Johnson very acridly declined to associ-

⁵⁵ John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History* (New York, 1905), IX, 34; Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, The War Years* (New York, 1939), III, 71. Randall, *Civil War*, 611-612.

⁵⁶ June 4, 1864.

⁵⁷ Henry Cheever to G. B. C., Worcester, June 8, 1864.

⁵⁸ Cheever denounced Presidential suspension of habeas corpus as an invasion of Congressional rights.

⁵⁹ June 4, 1864.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, July 2, 1864.

ate himself with any movement which so strongly smattered of "Copperheadism."⁶¹ Though others might regard the "new party" as disloyal and closely akin to "Copperheadism," Cheever maintained that there was no resemblance to the pro-Southern Democrats.

Lincoln's pocket-veto of the Wade-Davis reconstruction measure alarmed Cheever, as it did other radicals who advocated harsh dealing with the rebellious South.⁶² The resignation of Secretary Chase, the revised draft legislation, and the unfavorable military situation caused a wave of despair to sweep the nation in July and August. The Republican campaign managers shook their heads, and even the standard-bearer was ready to concede defeat.⁶³

According to Carl Sandburg, George Cheever was one of Lincoln's most critical opponents during these dark days. One July evening the Church of the Puritans was decorated with mottoes: "Fremont the pathfinder of freedom," "Lincoln weighed in the balance and found wanting," and "This is the time to swap horses." In an especially denunciatory address, Cheever again asserted that Lincoln's slavery policy, dictated by expediency rather than justice, marked him unfit to lead the nation for another four years.⁶⁴ Cheever apparently did not realize that by supporting Fremont he was detracting from Lincoln's support, thereby greatly increasing the election chances of the Democrats, whom Cheever professed to loathe.

During August, when the lights burned dimmest, many Republicans, especially of a radical nature, seriously contemplated the convoking of a session at Cincinnati or Chicago for the purpose of replacing Lincoln with a more appealing candidate, perhaps Fremont or Benjamin Butler.⁶⁵ The Democrats had not yet nominated their candidate. Gathering in Chicago on August 29, they had hardly selected McClellan as their leader, when the country

⁶¹ Oliver Johnson to Henry Cheever, New York, June 16, 1864.

⁶² Elizabeth Washburn to G. B. C., Worcester, June 25, 1864. On the back of this letter, Cheever penned a sarcastic denunciation of Lincoln's pocket veto.

⁶³ Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*, III, 167-224.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 195. Sandburg treats Cheever as a typical example of opposition to Abraham Lincoln.

⁶⁵ Randall, *Civil War*, 618-619.

was stirred by the news of Sherman's glorious victory at Atlanta. A wave of optimism electrified the nation. George Cheever, vacationing at Saratoga, read the handwriting on the wall, and realized that Fremont's chances of election were nil. "As the project for a new Convention is nowhere announced, I conclude it has failed as I feared it would, as almost every opportunity to strike for God and justice in behalf of the enslaved has been thrown away."⁶⁶ As always Cheever placed righteousness, as he saw it, above political expediency.

When John C. Fremont withdrew from the Presidential race in September 22, 1864, Cheever was actually pleased; but he disagreed with "the Pathfinder" who held that Lincoln was pledged to a Union without slavery.⁶⁷ Cheever still distrusted Lincoln's slavery policy and regarded Seward as the President's spokesman when the former just previously asserted that slavery would not be considered until the Union had been preserved.⁶⁸

Although Cheever expressed contempt for the "Copperheads" ("What an excorable set of traitors. God is very merciful in not giving us over into their power,"⁶⁹), it is extremely doubtful whether he voted for Lincoln. He failed to realize that abstention from voting by nominal Republicans might be as effective in deciding the election's outcome as a vote for McClellan. On election day, Cheever was not in New York City, for he feared the renewal of Irish riots in the city and a country-wide "Copperhead" revolt.⁷⁰

Cheever must have hailed the passage by the House of Representatives of the 13th Amendment on January 31, 1865, although perhaps the proposed alteration of the Constitution might not have been in the exact form the clergyman would have most preferred.

Abraham Lincoln, whom Cheever had probably denounced more frequently than he had any other contemporary, was assassinated on Good Friday, 1865. The clergy, on Easter Sunday, universally directed their thoughts to the national tragedy. In common with others Cheever paid tribute to the fallen hero:

⁶⁶ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, Saratoga, September 10, 1864.

⁶⁷ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, New York, September 22, 1864.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, New York, November 1, 1864.

The death of Abraham Lincoln—our just, noble, generous, high-feeling President by the cowardly bullet of the assassin, had penetrated to the household-heart of every homestead in the land with the keenness and soreness under which we writhed at the taking off of a near personal friend. . . .⁷¹

Cheever agreed with many that Booth was not the only conspirator. He believed that every leader of the rebellion was implicated, and prayed that leniency for the rebel chiefs would not be tolerated. He invoked God's blessing upon Andrew Johnson, as well as a liberal share of the "same precepts of wisdom" which had distinguished his predecessor, Abraham Lincoln.⁷²

In the course of a few days, Cheever preached four sermons on Lincoln's death.⁷³ On Fast Day he voiced the sentiment that God's handiwork was present in the passing of Lincoln.

The President has fallen a martyr that the nation might raise a monument to his memory by a proper justice to traitors. He was too gentle, too lenient to deal justice to such criminals. . . . All felt secure in the gentleness of his nature. Another of sterner mold will better carry out the justice and will of God. We must not lose sight of this distinction. Pardon is a gift; Justice is a necessity. . . . This although the most notable is only one of the many murders by the Rebels. The leaders are responsible and rightly deserve punishment. It is they who have murdered the President. . . .⁷⁴

Cheever felt that Grant had grievously erred when he treated Lee so magnanimously at Appomatox. "The slaveholding aristocracy must be annihilated. . . . The military leaders are not less traitors for happening to be taken with arms in their hands. Both parties (State and military) are traitors, and have consummated the most horrible scheme of treason ever recorded in the annals of mankind."⁷⁵ As in his *Defense of Capital Punishment*, 1842, Cheever

⁷¹ New York Tribune, April 17, 1865, 8. This was taken from an account by a Tribune reporter who was detailed to cover Cheever's sermon on Easter Sunday.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, New York, April 24, 1865.

⁷⁴ New York Tribune, April 21, 1865, 7.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Cheever was not the only clergyman to view Lincoln's death as a Godsend. See Paul H. Buck, *The Road to Reunion 1865-1900* (Boston, 1937), 12-14.

still adhered to the Old Testament dictum, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

Cheever never forgave the administration for its failure to execute the leaders of the Confederacy. In 1868 when a United States Army major visited Cheever in behalf of Washington College of which Robert E. Lee had been appointed president in 1865, Cheever was still adamant. He averred that it would have afforded him "much pleasure to have joined my name with those distinguished personages who were recommending this affair, had it been simply a plan for benefiting the South. But I could not conscientiously covenant the support of an educational institution under the charge of one of the greatest traitors and rebels in the land."⁷⁶ Andersonville and the fact that Lee had left a high position in the Union army to accept the leadership of the Confederate forces were not easily eradicated from Cheever's thinking.⁷⁷

The new President, Andrew Johnson, in general, tried to carry out the reconstruction plans of his dead chief. On May 29, 1865, Johnson issued proclamations outlining the pardon policy and reconstruction policy of the administration, both modelled on Lincoln's pattern.⁷⁸ On National Fast Day, June 1, 1865, Cheever attacked Johnson for his liberality to the rebels, and for his failure to carry out the reconstruction wishes of the Radical Congressmen of the Sumner and Stevens type. He feared that Johnson would reestablish white supremacy in the South, and that the negroes would be restored to their former oppressed condition. Referring specifically to Johnson's proclamation appointing W. W. Holden provisional governor of North Carolina, in which Johnson had revealed his reconstruction policy, Cheever said: "We are using the power which God has put in our hands by his own overwhelming of the rebellion and of slavery together for us, to crush the delivered slaves, as black men, by virtue of their color, under the feet of their oppressors. . . ."⁷⁹ Cheever already envisioned the day when the troops would be withdrawn from the South, and the whites would again assume control. Cheever asserted that negroes

⁷⁶ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, New York, February 6, 1868.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Randall, *Civil War*, 712.

⁷⁹ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 1, 1865.

were as deserving of suffrage as were the whites, and "more deserving than the rebels."⁸⁰

Throughout the summer and fall Cheever preached against Andrew Johnson. On one occasion he remarked, "I am filled with anguish, and horror hath taken hold upon me, when I see a blaspheming Ahab in the Presidential chair, and all parties bowing down before him, and afraid to rebuke his blasphemy and cruelty."⁸¹ Cheever feared that neither Congress nor the church intended to thwart Johnson's plans. By the time Congress assembled in December, 1865, the Southern States had completed their reorganization and were seeking readmission to the Union. Edward Gilbert, Parker Pillsbury and George Cheever drew up a petition of protest to the Senate and House of Representatives. The document deprecated Presidential control of reconstruction, objected to Johnson's "too free" use of the pardon power, denounced white Supremacy in the South, and admonished Congress to assert its authority in the matter.⁸² Throughout the succeeding months of the bitter struggle between the Radicals and Johnson, Cheever sided wholeheartedly with the Radicals, insisting that negro rights were safer in the hands of Sumner, Wade, Davis, and Stevens, than those of the "negro-hating" and "rebel-loving" president.⁸³ Cheever vigorously supported those who sought to impeach President Johnson, denouncing such men as William Pitt Fessenden, Senator from Maine, and Lyman Trumbull, Senator from Illinois, as "conservatives" and "sentimental pliables."⁸⁴

Though guided by lofty motives, Cheever's efforts sometimes appeared to have been misdirected. Whatever else Cheever was, he certainly was consistent in his labors in the Negroes' behalf. That the Negro in the South did not gain political equality or even supremacy was not the fault of George B. Cheever.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 17, 1865, and July 1, 1865, carried a complete account of Cheever's Fast Day sermon.

⁸¹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth Washburn, New York, October 3, 1865.

⁸² *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 16, 1865.

⁸³ G. B. C. to Henry Cheever, Saratoga Springs, August 28, 1867.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XV

RETIREMENT

The years following the Civil War were not prosperous ones for the Church of the Puritans.¹ Apparently unable to make ends meet financially there were plans to sell the structure at Union Square and merge with another society farther uptown. The plans to sell matured quite quickly and on May 12, 1867, Cheever preached his last sermon in the old church. The occasion was the anniversary of the Church Anti-Slavery Society of which Cheever was a founder and the sermon was "commemorative and historical" in nature. Among its revelations was one that the church building rested on leased ground for which the rent of \$10,000 was "more than we can pay." Defiant to the end Cheever probably quite correctly maintained that "we could have held our present citadel had we kept silent" [on slavery].²

Although Cheever's group later resumed services under its own auspices, these meetings do not appear to have evoked a large following.³ Anyway, during the summer of 1871, the Cheevers re-

¹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, New York, January 19, 1866; G. B. C. to Elizabeth, New York, April 26, 1866; Elizabeth to G. B. C., Worcester, May 1, 1867. From family correspondence it would appear that the Cheevers inherited a sum of money about this time. Presumably the death of Lizzie's father gave her an ample inheritance thus making it less imperative for George to continue his preaching. Charlotte Eastman to Elizabeth Washburn, Beverly, December 3, 1866.

² *Independent*, May 16, 1867; New York *Herald*, May 13, 1867. Tiffany bought the edifice paying about \$78,000 which enabled the Church of the Puritans to pay its debts, including considerable back salary to the pastor, with a substantial sum available for investment until construction of a new building could be undertaken elsewhere, presumably in cooperation with another society. *Ibid.* A letter dated May 24, 1884, indicates that the old church was bought by a Baptist Church and removed to W-53 St. where it became a Colored Baptist Church with ex-slaves constituting the majority (nine-tenths) of its membership. Cheever was invited to preach the dedication sermon in June 1884 and was requested to rephrase "one of those old sermons that used to make yourself and everybody else sweat, say about the year 1859-60, it would be a most capital thing, if for no other reason, just to hear how it would sound, in the most costly and commodious sanctuary of the blacks in the United States..." Thomas Armitage to G. B. C., New York, May 24, 1884; also a clipping from a paper under date of July 10, 1884, under "from our New York correspondent" which is found in the 1884 portfolio of Cheever papers.

³ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, New York, October 24, 1868; December 27,

moved from New York City to Englewood, New Jersey. If there had been much in the way of preaching and pastoral demands upon the clergyman, this would hardly have been possible. When the opportunity to supply the 42nd Street Presbyterian Church in New York during the summer of 1872 presented itself, Cheever found it pleasant and gratifying; "It is a great blessing, a wondrous privilege, which I never appreciated more profoundly, perhaps never so profoundly till after an interval of silence and inactivity. God is very merciful and gracious in giving me these opportunities."⁴

Finally the plans for merging with another church were completed when in June 1873 an arrangement was entered into with the Second Presbyterian Church of Harlem.⁵ This society, under the pastoral care of the Reverend Edward Clark, had been formed in March of 1872 by the Presbytery of New York and was temporarily holding services at 125th Street between 4th and Lexington Avenues until its church building could be completed. Obviously the Church of the Puritans contributed little to the merger except the name and the promise of a substantial sum of money.⁶ Among the conditions of union were those that the Second Church should henceforth be known as the Church of the Puritans, that Cheever should have the title of pastor emeritus and "be relieved of all care of church and parish," and that he should be invited to deliver twelve lectures annually on "Evidence of Christianity" with the interest on twelve thousand dollars set aside as a permanent lecture fund to pay for same.⁷

1868; November, 1869; January 2, 1870; May 1, 1870. An examination of the Cheever papers indicates that Cheever was not preaching regularly between May 1867 and November 1869 and only infrequently thereafter. See letter of March 2, 1872, which speaks hopefully of an early renewal of services by the Church of the Puritans. G. B. C. to Elizabeth, March 2, 1872.

⁴ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, August 2, 1872.

⁵ Earlier plans to unite with another Presbyterian society apparently failed. See letter of May 18, 1872, from Edward Gilbert to G. B. C. See also an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Church Extension Committee of the New York Presbytery of December 16, 1872, which is found in the Cheever portfolio for the year 1872.

⁶ Theodore F. Savage, *The Presbyterian Church in New York City* (New York, 1949), 187.

⁷ Copy of a resolution adopted by the Second Presbyterian Church on June 14, 1873. It is endorsed on the back by George B. Cheever on June 16, 1873, and located in the Cheever portfolio for the year 1873.

Unfortunately for the new church the year 1873 brought the most disastrous economic collapse yet experienced in the Nineteenth century. The funds promised by Cheever's group had been invested in city lots whose value now dwindled markedly.⁸ Many who had subscribed liberally to the building fund were virtually penniless. For a time it looked as though the church would have to be abandoned. By a herculean effort the project was pushed to completion but with a staggering debt of \$80,000.⁹ Almost the last public association, if not the last, which Cheever had with this church was in 1875 when he delivered the principal address at the dedicatory exercises.¹⁰ The anticipated lecture series evidently did not carry beyond the year 1874 when instead of the twelve only six were delivered. There was little money to pay for the lectures and Cheever found them burdensome for he wrote his sister after only three had been delivered that they have "overrun my ammunition" and tax my "reserve powers" too much.¹¹ Regular preaching no longer had the appeal it once possessed. After all Cheever was now nearly seventy years of age, financially independent and living outside the city in a delightful rural setting.

Although Cheever was now officially designated pastor emeritus, his retirement must be considered an active one for he frequently served as supply pastor and lecturer, wrote many articles for the religious newspapers and periodicals, published books on current theological questions and kept up a large correspondence. Also there were frequent visits with friends and relatives and the annual vacations at Saratoga as long as health permitted. A lover of nature Cheever also spent many happy hours working on the

⁸ See a pamphlet published in New York in 1889 entitled *Church of the Puritans*. The lots declined in value by an amount of \$40,000.

⁹ With the aid of the Church Extension Committee of the Presbytery of New York and by agreement with the mortgage holders the debt was scaled down to a few thousand dollars and completely extinguished in 1878. For many years the new Church of the Puritans was a fashionable and flourishing society. Finally in 1936 after the negro population had taken over the area it was sold for a negro church, the Church of St. Ambrose (Episcopal). See Savage, *Presbyterian Church*, 187.

¹⁰ There are no references in the Cheever manuscripts to further preaching assignments at the New York Church.

¹¹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, May 28, 1874. These lectures were fully reported in the *Tribune* on successive Mondays from May 4, 1874, to June 15, 1874, inclusive.

grounds and in the gardens of his Englewood home. Of course he still adhered to the ideas and principles he had always championed but in the new America which emerged between 1865 and 1890 (the date generally regarded as the closing of the frontier and incidentally the year of Cheever's death) he found many new situations as well as some old ones in which to apply them. To whatever conditions the principles were applied it was always with the same fire and vehemence which had characterized his work when in the pulpit at Union Square.

Throughout the Reconstruction period he upbraided all those who appeared to be working against political and social equality for the negroes. Naturally the Democrats were a favorite target and would always be so until the end of his life. When Grant was campaigning in 1868 Cheever wrote: "All the wickedness of this modern age and country seems concentrated in the Democratic party, whose ill health runs mainly in delirium tremens and hatred of the negro. They are trying to reinstate the rebellion but I trust in God they will be defeated."¹² Again when the Liberal Republicans in 1872 nominated Horace Greeley for the presidency on a platform calling for reconciliation with the South and the Democrats accepted his candidacy, Cheever wrote: "I send likewise a dose of Vinegar Bitters for Henry [his brother], such as he is trying to persuade the people of the United [States] to take, which if they do, they will endure more than a four years' colic, the whole democratic party going through their intestines with all their rings and rascalities. We might digest Greeley outside the democracy but he has gone down into their zoological organization as a rabbit is swallowed by an Anaconda, and we could not digest the Anaconda."¹³

¹² G. B. C. to Elizabeth, August 1, 1868. Written from Saratoga where the Cheevers went each season as long as health permitted. Lizzie suffered badly from neuralgia from Civil War days until her death in November 1886. Although the Cheevers had been accustomed to go to Saratoga for many years, they now went to secure relief for Mrs. Cheever's neuralgia also.

¹³ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, October 30, 1872. The campaign excited George very much as it did his brother and sister. Henry was much enthused by Greeley's candidacy and worked for him in Massachusetts. Evidently Elizabeth was also quite sympathetic to Mr. Greeley. In a letter dated October 30, 1872, George wrote as follows: "And the hens have organized themselves into republican regiments with processions and banners, and are so busy swallowing democratic bugs, that they have no time for laying, but

Even though the scandals and corruption of Grant's second administration sickened Cheever, he could not bring himself to desert his party and he rallied behind the candidacy of Rutherford Hayes whose record in Ohio was commendable. Like most Republicans he was elated by the findings of the Electoral Commission which gave the election to Hayes. "We are all greatly relieved and very thankful to God for the prospect of President Hayes' quiet inauguration. What a set of filibustering villains are endeavoring to ride the Democratic party to the ruin of the country."¹⁴ Unlike many Republicans who were now ready to abandon the negro in the South to white supremacy and the Democratic Party, Cheever deplored Hayes' prompt carrying out of that portion of the "Wormley Agreement" which called for the withdrawal of Federal troops from the South. "We are perplexed and troubled at President Hayes' policy in regard to South Carolina and Louisiana, and think he should have exacted some stringent pledges and securities for the negroes before withdrawing the U. S. troops." As far as Cheever could see the negroes would now be "in the hands of their old oppressors."¹⁵ When subsequent events seemed to confirm his worst fears he wrote: "How like Cain and the progeny of the first liar and murderer from the beginning are the irreclaimable rebels and tyrants of the South, in alliance with the Democratic party, in their treatment of the negroes! And our government almost as treacherous, pretending, as of old, a constitutional inability to protect them! May it please God to give us a President whose little finger shall be thicker than Abraham Lincoln's loins, in

promise a mighty Grant of eggs and great bassoons of chuckling and crowing after election. We hope they will not be disappointed; but if they should and a gentleman named Horace becomes their political master, dragging them into the bottomless pit of Democracy, they will all have to do service as treasury rats, a transformation not a bit more wonderful than Horace's own. If this dreadful fate befalls us, Henry might write an inaugural after the manner of Milton

'Hail, Horace, hail, and thou profoundest Hell,
Receive thy new possessor!'

How would the elements of Tammany bellow applause through the vast and boundless deep! But I hope they will bellow with pain and shame as the result of the defeat next Tuesday when their methods and medicines fully operate. . . ."

¹⁴ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, February 28, 1877.

¹⁵ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, April 13, 1877.

justice and righteousness, to punish and subdue these new crops of traitors, and to shield the victims of their malice, and reestablish our liberties! . . ." In the face of the Democratic majority in the United States Senate he feared little could or would be done at that time.¹⁶

Each fresh evidence of negro suppression found Cheever refusing to acquiesce and at least in private correspondence he voiced his opposition to those measures which made a "mockery" of freedom. When the Supreme Court of the United States handed down its decisions in the Civil Rights Cases voiding the Civil Rights Act of 1875, largely on the grounds that the Fourteenth Amendment was "prohibitory upon the States," and not upon private persons, Cheever reacted in much the same manner as when the *Dred Scott* decision had been announced in Buchanan's administration:

We are under a despotism, if seven or ten men can annihilate one of the Articles of our Constitution framed for the protection of the down trodden negroes. . . . The decision of the Supreme Court against it is the attempted consignment of the slaves and their descendants back to the reign of contempt, injury and ignominy, perpetuated and justified on the ground of the colour of the skin, which may render the commonest privileges of citizenship null and void and unavailable. It is the very essence of the edict, . . . that Black men have no rights that white men are bound to respect. A resurrectic band of Ku-Klux savages could hardly have done worse, or exhibited a greater contempt of justice and humanity. All honor to Justice Harland for resisting the decision, and shame to the editors of some of our leading newspapers, once profuse in their professions of hatred to slavery, and love to the blacks, who now betray their cause, and deny the Constitutional obligation of our Government to protect them from the attainder of cruelty and social excommunication and insult, against themselves, their families and children to the latest generation, wherever the habit of social ostracism and oppression shall exist. . . .¹⁷

If Cheever had been a younger man with a regular pulpit, we would have expected some rousing sermons in a similar vein. Even

¹⁶ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, May 1, 1879. Until his death Cheever rejoiced in each Republican victory at the national level and deplored Democratic successes. He was especially upset by Cleveland's victory for he regarded Cleveland not only unfriendly to the negro but grossly immoral as well.

¹⁷ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, November 23, 1883.

in the last months of his life when most Northerners had forgotten or at least thrust aside the fate of the negro in the United States he was still the friend of the oppressed. For his sister he penned a little poem which he dedicated to the "dusty races, Chinese or Negroes, that have no rights that white men are bound to respect:"

Who dares his coloured brother curse,
Shall hear the curse of Cain
And wander through the Universe,
In self-inflicted pain!

They who would rise by steps and stones,
Flung on a prostrate race,
Themselves shall be cast forth the scorns
Of unsuppressed disgrace!

They may build cities through the world,
Called by their first-born's name;
But such shall be to ruin whirled,
Memorials of their shame!¹⁸

For him the brotherhood of man held no terrors. The black, the red, and the yellow races were as much the sons and daughters of their Father in Heaven as the whites. Woe be unto him who attempted to violate God's holy ordinances by curtailing the privileges of or denying justice to a man simply because the color of his skin was different from that of the majority of the population. How Cheever would have rejoiced if he could have heard the United States Supreme Court decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Bolling v. Sharpe* (1954).

As the poem quoted above suggests, Cheever would never forget the American Indian. The problem which had excited the young clergyman during Andrew Jackson's administration stirred him anew, when the white men invaded the mountain fastnesses in search of precious metals or pressed relentlessly forward to occupy the rich lands of the Great Plains. While commenting on a thieving weasel which had recently carried away thirty-one chickens and hens, Cheever launched into a discussion of current Indian policy: "If they [weasels] were Indians, we could make treaties with them, and cajole them with proposals and promises, and then set

¹⁸ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, June 3, 1890. Cheever left his library to Howard University, Washington, D. C.

the United States Army upon them, after ourselves breaking all the treaties, and starving and cheating and compelling those whom we have robbed, into self-defense or death! . . . Since God compelled us by rebellion and war to cease from slavery we have had but little scope for our oppressive and treaty-breaking instincts and habits except against the Indians, whom not being able to enslave them constitutionally, we can cheat and govern and destroy by fighting, and compelling them to fight, or be starved and die. A John Brown is needed, and a band of resolute abolitionists, to stand up against the government. . . .”¹⁹ Although he returned to the subject many times, he added little to what he had already said before.

What was more natural than that Cheever should be moved by discrimination against the Chinese—a policy which became general in those areas of the country where the Chinese became fairly numerous and which finally resulted in national legislation effectively blocking the further influx of Chinese laborers.²⁰

To one who was sensitive to “sin” in any form the graft and corruption that flourished in the years that are spanned by Grant’s administrations must have been exceedingly painful. Certainly this was true in Cheever’s case and he expressed himself at great length publicly and privately. In one of his philippics he said:

I think Asaph and David would have met their match in Tweed, Hall, Sweeny and company, and would have had to confess that the grace which answered for a conflict with such megatheriums of Satan a thousand years before Christ came, needed to be doubled in the nineteenth century of Christianity among the Leviathans of New York. There were giants in the old days of the world, but they were children and babes in comparison with these towering growths of successful corruption. Men that can steal millions, and when discovered and accused, can break into the public offices of a Sunday morning, and steal and burn their own vouchers, and still hold the highest posts of government, and walk the streets unmolested,—there was nothing Antediluvian that can ever beat this play. Where it will stop, or what will come of it, no man can tell. There must be an interposition of God to save us, as there was in the days of slavery, or it is all over with us. . . .²¹

¹⁹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, July 14, 1878.

²⁰ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, April 9, 1880.

²¹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, October 2, 1871. See also G. B. C. to Elizabeth, November 26, 1873. In fact many letters during the second Grant

One of the sensations in the Protestant world of this period was the trial of Henry Ward Beecher for adultery with the wife of Theodore Tilton, a friend and associate. Although the charges had been public since 1871, the trial was not held until 1875 and ended after six months in disagreement. Cheever had known the principals for many years and found the affair most disagreeable. He and Beecher had come to New York about the same time and Beecher was still regarded in most circles as Congregationalism's greatest apostle in New York and in many as Protestantism's most powerful voice in America. Theodore Tilton had once been a member of the Church of the Puritans and by his own testimony had been initiated into abolitionism by the Reverend Cheever. Moreover Cheever had been responsible for Tilton's position on the *Independent*. That these two men should fight and in this manner grieved Cheever greatly. He wanted very much to believe that Beecher was innocent but he wondered. One of his first references to the case was in August 1874 when he said:

What a breaking up of confidences and wrecks of character and unveiling of tragedies and accumulation of scandals and miseries in the recent disclosures at Brooklyn! All our leisure for reading has been quite inadequate to the tracing and understanding of the details in the newspapers of these moral landslides, and reservoir breakdowns or mountain avalanches of evil. The dams of all kinds of capitalists seem to be giving way, national and individual, physical and spiritual, councils, churches, jurors, judges are seen roaring, struggling, revolving under the waves in the vortex. If the foundations be broken up, what can the righteous do? Who are the righteous? How can we be sure that any of us are such. . . .²²

Again in February when the trial was in full swing he confided to Elizabeth as follows:

If Mr. Beecher is an innocent man, who, since the time of Job and Jeremiah, ever has had to bear such assaults of men and devils. All the boils and false friends that it pleased God to permit

administration have references in the above vein to the scandalous actions of the day. It does seem to the writer that it was easier for Cheever to wax eloquent on Democratic scandals than on those which reflected upon the Republican party.

²² G. B. C. to Elizabeth, August 3, 1874.

Satan to let loose upon the patriarch seem but as a flea bite in comparison with the Woodhulls, Moultons and Tiltons and their venomous slanders, if their charges are false. And indeed I do not see how anything but conscious innocence, and the protection and grace of God can possibly sustain Mr. Beecher, as he seems to be sustained in the midst of this mighty trial. Yet, if innocent, why did he not come forth long ago, in mercy to the community as well as justice to himself and faithfulness to the cause of the Master, and deny these lies, and challenge and face his accusers? And if innocent, why should he be afraid, or his lawyers for him, of any width or depth or thoroughness of investigation, any kind of evidence or testimony that can be offered or produced, or any method of trial that may be resorted to? The complications on both sides of this tragic case are such as pass all comprehension, and how any jury or judge can come to a decision in regard to it, it is impossible to see. But the mischief it is doing and the misery it has caused. . . .²³

One must suspect that Cheever was much more concerned about the "cause" than anything else at this time and it was with great relief that he was able to turn to the evangelistic services of Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey as an antidote to the sordid details of Beecher's private life. Cheever spoke of the duo in glowing terms. "For there are such blessed marks of simplicity, disinterestedness, pure love to Christ and to souls for his sake, and plainness and faithfulness in setting forth the pure gospel of the Word of Christ, that no reasonable man can doubt that they are really his evangelists, born and prepared and ordained not of the will of the flesh, nor of man, nor of any of men's hierarchies, or consociations, or presbyteries, or theological colleges or chapters, or licensures to preach, but of God. . . ." ²⁴ George and his wife went to hear these evangelists several times in 1875 and 1876²⁵ and always came away convinced that much good was being produced by their services. In fact he said that it would not take "any great multiplication of men like Moody and Sankey . . . to convert the world, even a world of carnal minds, dead in trespass and sins." ²⁶

The further secularization of the Sabbath which modern America brought with it found Cheever as opposed as ever. When the *New York Tribune* began to issue a Sunday edition he ex-

²³ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, February 3, 1875.

²⁴ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, November 23, 1875.

²⁵ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, February 26, 1876; April 3, 1876.

²⁶ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, November 23, 1875.

claimed: "What a shame and pitiful descent from the high position of that paper, its issue of a Sunday edition."²⁷ When the Worcester *Spy* followed suit a few years later he pronounced it to be "the plain duty of every Christian family that has hitherto patronized and received the paper immediately to drop it, and have nothing more to do with it, except by endeavoring to persuade others to cast it out from their perusal and support."²⁸ He was gratified to learn that Elizabeth had banished the "traitorous" paper from her home²⁹ and hoped that the churches of Worcester would have a public discussion on the "demoralizing" effect of Sunday papers which he called "devil's almanacs" and a "dose of chloroform for every conscience."³⁰ Oftentimes he referred to the penalties that man would have to pay for his failure to keep God's word and to "remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." Typical of his warnings was his solemn pronouncement to his sister in a New Year's greeting for 1881 that "Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces, and the fires of the French Revolution, and the cruelties of the Papacy, and the Socialistic Nihilism of Russia, shall have been a mild and genial atmosphere" compared to what would happen to man unless he repented of his sins of the Sunday trains, Sunday newspapers, personal and public immorality, taking the Bible out of the schools and so on.³¹

During this same period Protestantism was threatened from within and without as it never had been before. The "within" dangers stemmed largely from the ideas released by Darwin's *Origin of the Species* and the critical examination of the Scriptures by Biblical scholars. For Cheever there was no such thing as a figurative translation of the Bible and he summoned his old zeal to defend the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. Unquestionably his most significant effort along these lines was the book *God's Time Piece for Man's Eternity* which appeared in 1883. In it he showed himself to be a capable foe of the "new ideas" which were passing as "modernism."³² This book was accorded favorable

²⁷ G. B. C. to Henry, January 25, 1880.

²⁸ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, August 4, 1888.

²⁹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, September 8, 1888.

³⁰ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, August 4, 1888.

³¹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, January 1, 1881. See letter of January 25, 1880. Also September 23, 1882.

³² George B. Cheever, *God's Time Piece for Man's Eternity* (New

notices in the leading orthodox papers³³ and periodicals and may have influenced the thinking of many persons who were caught up in the theological disputes of the hour.³⁴ Among the many notes of personal appreciation for the book which Cheever received was one which must have pleased him very much. It was from Edwin Ferris, an old parishioner in Union Square. It said:

I had purchased the "Time Piece" as soon as it was published, and found the same old sledge hammer that made the anvil ring in the "dear old church." . . . We are in especial need of such a "Time Piece" here. Watches here seem to be almost all wrong and I am really afraid that many will miss the heavenly train unless the dust is cleared away from the main spring of their inner life. But the worst of it is that our ministers throw dust in our eyes and make us breathe it. Only last Sabbath morning Dr. Lyman Abbott enveloped Paul in so much dust that we hardly recognized him; in fact he looked more like an emaciated Beecher than the grand old warrior as you represented him to us, a blast from whose bugle was worth a thousand men.³⁵

The "without" threat to Protestantism was contained mainly in the rapid growth in membership and power of the Roman Catholic Church in the seventies and eighties. It was hardly to be expected that a Protestant clergyman who had been alarmed by

York, 1883). This book of 443 pages is an able and vigorous defense of "fundamentalism." Two years earlier in 1881 Cheever had published a book entitled *Faith, Doubt and Evidence. God's Vouchers for His Written Word* which according to the author had received favorable notices but little circulation. G. B. C. to Elizabeth, May 7, 1883.

³³ A clipping from *Zion's Herald* is typical. It referred to the book as "one of the most positive and incisive defenses of Revelation and revealed religion that has been published in this generation, and will aid in giving robustness to faith and in offering a spiritual clue to the symbolical, historical, poetic, and prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament." This clipping is found in the 1883 Cheever portfolio.

³⁴ Evidently Cheever was not too hopeful that his book would stem the tide of "modernism" for he wrote that "the defenders of the Bible Revision are in great power, and abhor any interference with the despotism." G. B. C. to Elizabeth, May 7, 1883. Cheever expressed fear that Andover and Bangor Seminaries were faltering in their devotion to the "old time religion" and professed to be much shocked when Old South Church in Boston "caved in" and accepted the "new ideas." See his letters to Elizabeth dated May 20, 1882, and May 5, 1884, respectively.

³⁵ Edwin Ferris to G. B. C., Montclair, October 5, 1883.

the developments of the forties and fifties would take any comfort in the large and increasing influx of population from traditionally Catholic countries of Europe which made the Roman Church the largest in America. Cheever's reaction was, if possible, fiercer than it had been earlier but the writer is convinced that it was more limited in influence and less effective than in the days before the Civil War.

The correspondence of the last decade of Cheever's life is full of references to Rome and its influence. Without doubt he wrote more on this than any other public question of the time. Three excerpts will suffice to indicate his thoughts. The first one relates to the British Parliament's defeat in 1886 of the Home Rule Bill for Ireland which the Gladstone ministry championed. Cheever rejoiced in the defeat of this bill which he said would have given a Roman Catholic "minority of six millions" the "power of vetoing the parliamentary government of some thirty millions of Protestants, because the subjects of the Pope of Rome are in sworn allegiance to that Man of Sin and Son of Perdition. Gavazzi used to say once let in the Camel's head, and his whole body will follow, and then there will be no room for any body else. Gladstone himself once affirmed that no Roman Catholic could safely be entrusted with political power in a free country! much more! much more no free government could go shares with the Vatican. They cannot live together unless they agree against God, to deprive Christ of his Supremacy, and turn the Bible out of the schools, and educate a race of revolutionary atheists."³⁶ The next year Cheever wrote: "We shall soon have a Roman Catholic President as things go on, and then comes the Niagara of National Perdition, and our plunge over it."³⁷ Finally in February 1888 he asked his sister if she had a copy of *Hierarchical Despotism*.³⁸ "If I had the time now, I would republish it, God willing, with notes adapted to the present rapid increase of the Romish Church and Papacy in the country."³⁹ As usual Cheever equated God's kingdom on earth

³⁶ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, July 9, 1886.

³⁷ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, April 8, 1887.

³⁸ See pages 106-107 of this book.

³⁹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, February 7, 1888. Other letters which are given over in a large measure to denunciation of Catholic philosophy and power are those of April 18, 1885, October 25, 1886, April 11, 1887, February 9 and 17, 1888, and October 1888.

and democracy in America with a Bible Commonwealth inhabited by God-fearing and practicing Christians of Protestant affiliation.

Outside of the Roman question wherever raised Cheever does not seem to have been particularly moved by questions of foreign policy, either of this country or any other. The big exception to this was the British conquest of Egypt, a country which Cheever had once visited and of which he held low opinions. In the current struggle his sympathies were naturally with a Christian country battling Mohammedanism but he was greatly disturbed that England's purpose was not clearly and avowedly "moral." Too much "commercialism and bond-holding" were involved.⁴⁰ How he longed for an English declaration of Christian purpose! Following the massacre of "Chinese" Gordon, one of England's most popular military leaders, at Khartum in the Sudan in January 1885 Cheever moaned:

And General Gordon's fate! Oh what a disgrace to England! What a terrible waste of time, courage, means, energies, soldiers, victories and battles. Surely if England goes a little longer in this style of hesitation, delay, incoherent counsels, sacrificing resources, apparently discarding all obligations of a conscience towards God and Christianity in diplomacies and indecisive movements, her prominence among the nations will not only cease but she may become like Egypt before her the basest of kingdoms though once the greatest. . . .⁴¹

Evidently Cheever accepted the idea of the white man's burden if that white man was a Christian and especially a Protestant. Cheever's lifelong support of the work of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions is ample proof that world evangelization to reclaim the "heathens" was very dear to his heart.

Throughout the years of his retirement Cheever remained faithful to those causes which had received his support during his active ministry. Racial discrimination and oppression whether involving the negro, the Chinese or the Indian were attacked as violations of God's laws. Profanation of the Sabbath and graft, corruption and immorality in public and private lives were denounced as forcefully as in early manhood. Theological controver-

⁴⁰ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, March 10, 1884.

⁴¹ G. B. C. to Elizabeth, March 8, 1885. See also his letter of April 16, 1885.

sies still found him championing the old, the orthodox and the fundamental. A militant Protestant he deplored the increasing numbers and power of Catholicism in the United States and the world.⁴²

Sorrow intrudes upon the life of all men at some time. The year 1868 brought the passing of the Reverend George Shepard of Bangor Theological Seminary, close family friend since childhood, and of Ichabod Washburn,⁴³ of Worcester, Massachusetts, the wealthy husband of George's sister, Elizabeth. Two more members of the family circle passed away in 1885 when Lizzie's brother, Sam Wetmore, and Henry Cheever's wife, Jane, died. The grief that was felt at their passing was as nothing compared to that which George experienced when his companion of forty years died suddenly in the late fall of 1886. The beloved Lizzie had been afflicted with neuralgia much of the time since 1865 but her death was quite unexpected. Often in the remaining four years of his life Cheever referred to the "painful, agonizing void" which the separation had brought. "If we did not hope it would not be eternal, what could we do?"⁴⁴

Although Cheever did not give himself over to despair and resignedly await his own passing, he never again bestirred himself to take the same interest he had formerly displayed in the affairs of society. Instead he dedicated the last years to the gigantic task of putting the voluminous family papers in order and preparing a

⁴² It would be very difficult to estimate Cheever's influence upon society after 1870. Through occasional sermons, articles, lectures, books and correspondence his views were available to many. Without a regular pulpit and without any regular medium through which to reach the public it is logical to assume that his influence was infinitesimal compared to what it was when he was preaching in one of America's most fashionable Protestant churches. The Reverend Rollin Sawyer in an article in the *Evangelist*, October 9, 1890, indicated that many—"old men and young beat a path to his door in Englewood." An editorial in the same issue of the same paper indicated that "owing to his seclusion in his own home, his scholarly habits, and his infrequent appearance for many years past on our streets, he was known only to a few."

⁴³ For nearly two years following Washburn's death Cheever was deeply engaged in public controversy revolving around the many bequests, especially the one to the American Bible Society, which the philanthropist had made. See the Cheever papers from January 1869 through the year 1870.

⁴⁴ G. B. C. to Elizabeth.

book as a memorial to his wife which he hoped to publish under the title of *Memorial Offerings of Faith, Hope and Love*. The work was far enough advanced so that brother Henry was able to put *Memorabilia* in the hands of the printer within three months of the death of George B. Cheever at Englewood, New Jersey, on October 1, 1890.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Henry T. Cheever, *Memorabilia of George B. Cheever and his Wife, Elizabeth Wetmore Cheever* (New York, 1890). A copy of Cheever's last will and testament is found in the portfolio for the year 1888 and indicates that he left a sizeable estate with public bequests totaling about \$40,000. The chief beneficiaries were the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Home Missionary Society, the Seamen's Friend Society, the Children's Aid Society for Friendless Boys and his brother, sister and nieces and nephews. See also page xxvii of *Memorabilia*.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

George B. Cheever was reared among paradoxical scenes, both in the community and the home. Though Hallowell was essentially a frontier town, it possessed the institutions and cultural achievements characteristic of a long-established community. Excellent schools, fine music, and the Vaughan library compensated for the barrenness of the Maine woods. Cheever's father was an industrious, liberal-minded, Jeffersonian-Democrat while the mother was a domineering, devoutly-religious Federalist. The father died when George was only twelve, and the mother's influence became paramount. She easily won the son to Federalism, but wide reading, the influence of the Vaughan, and Unitarian sympathies prevented early acceptance of Congregationalism.

Entering Bowdoin College in 1821, he achieved distinction in mathematics and literature, and graduated with Phi Beta Kappa honors. Though his fellows included Franklin Pierce, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry W. Longfellow, and Calvin Stowe, he formed no intimate friendships. In fact his professors and fellow-students uniformly failed to impress him.

A pious youth, he was constantly troubled about the relative merits of Congregationalism and Unitarianism. His Bowdoin experiences served only to deepen his perplexities, even though anxious friends and relatives constantly bombarded him with arguments favoring orthodoxy. Twice he left Andover Theological Seminary because he could not accept the conservative views of his professors. After a third attempt, his doubts were swept away, and henceforth he posed as a champion of the brand of Congregationalism known as New England theology.

His first preaching assignments were of an evangelistic nature, centering in Newburyport and Boston. In the "Hub" he gained valuable experience as an aide to the great revivalist, Charles G. Finney. In 1832 after establishing a reputation as a writer, he was called to the Howard Street Congregational Church in Salem, Massachusetts. Here he became embroiled in the Unitarian controversy, and by violent denunciations of the "infidel" followers of W. E. Channing, incurred the wrath of the Unitarians and their principal organ, the *Christian Examiner*. Even his colleagues, Richard Dana, Nehemiah Adams, and Chauncey A. Goodrich,

urged him to be more tactful, tolerant, and restrained. With difficulty their pleas were heeded. It was characteristic of Cheever that once he had settled a question in his own mind, he felt all others must accept his viewpoint. The efforts to discredit and crush his Unitarian opponents were only mildly successful. Unitarians remained Unitarians, though their rapid growth was arrested by the renaissance of Congregationalism of which Cheever was a conspicuous part. In the course of time Congregationalists became less fundamental, and distinctions between them and their liberal brethren less marked.

As a temperance crusader, Cheever did much to popularize this reform movement. *Deacon Giles Distillery* was a cleverly-conceived and effective piece of propaganda. The public-horse-whipping, the libel suit, and jail sentence increased Cheever's renown, and accelerated the tempo of the fight against liquor. As an anti-slavery advocate, 1834-1836, Cheever did not greatly increase his personal prestige since conservative New Englanders were not yet ready to sanction radical abolitionism.

Removing to New York in 1839, Cheever joined those who scathingly attacked the increasing power of the Catholic Church in America. Well acquainted with the vices of the Medieval Church and with the corruption of the contemporary church in France, Italy, and Spain, he was in the van of the "Protestant Crusade." Fiercely denunciatory, he waged a losing battle. The trickle of Catholic immigrants became an ever widening stream. The Bible was excluded from the public schools, and there was little satisfaction in that Catholics were compelled to establish parochial schools with private funds. Even the Puritan Sabbath, so dear to Cheever, was undermined by Sunday trains and the increasing popularity of the "continental Sabbath." Though he fought a losing campaign, he gained enhanced prestige among the country's middle-class Protestants. From 1846-1865, as pastor of the Church of the Puritans, as featured correspondent of the *Independent*, and a lyceum lecturer, he exerted considerable influence upon his fellow citizens.

From 1836 to 1850 Cheever ignored the slavery question. With the passage of the Compromise of 1850, he again wielded the cudgel of abolitionism. Until 1857 he posed as a "respectable" anti-slavery agitator; but following the Dred Scott decision, he

emerged as the most radical *religious* abolitionist of the era. Basing his arguments on the Old Testament, which he construed as outlawing slavery and slaveholding, and pronouncing it a sin in the eyes of God, he preached the Lord's vengeance upon a guilty nation. As the modern "Isaiah," he damned Supreme Court decisions, pro-slavery legislation, "time-serving" ministers, "mugwump" editors, and "pussyfooting" societies such as the American Tract Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Denounced by former friends and maligned by his own parishioners, he clung tenaciously to his pulpit and to abolitionist preaching. Devoted to Congregationalism, he would not join the American Anti-Slavery Society though Garrison, Phillips, Goodell, and Pillsbury tried to bring about such a union. Nevertheless during the Civil War he frequently cooperated with such radicals as Pillsbury, Gerrit Smith, Susan B. Anthony, and Goodell. Throughout the war, first as an advocate of immediate emancipation, then as a champion of revengeful Congressional reconstruction, he attacked the Lincoln administration. So irritating were his assaults that James Gordon Bennett once pronounced Cheever's life "unconstitutionally long."

For thirty-five years George Cheever was a prominent and influential figure on the religious, temperance and anti-slavery scene. He consistently viewed national problems from the moral standpoint, and condemned any action which violated Old Testament doctrines or smattered of expediency. For him there was one law—the Law of God—and it was superior to all human enactments. That which did not conform was sinful. The political or economic aspects of a particular problem did not interest him. The establishment of a Bible Commonwealth inhabited by righteous Protestants was a major concern. That he failed to bring about such a society was not his fault. Perhaps he was impractical, but he was absolutely sincere and consistent. He hated oppression, but in his efforts to crush it became oppressive himself. Yet he must not be condemned too harshly for his intolerance since he was guided by lofty and humanitarian motives.

That so many former friends turned against him, must have been painful. Although the personal element was important, Cheever's belief in the sinfulness of slavery and his duty to preach that sinfulness alienated the majority of his associates. At best

abolitionists were mildly popular, and a first rank religious agitator in addition was too much for many people. If his conscience had permitted silence on slavery, he might easily have retained his hold upon the wealthy members of the Church of the Puritans. Unflinching support for such radicals as John Brown and Thaddeus Hyatt, the establishment of a Cheever dictatorship at Union Square, and the "begging-mission" engendered reasonable differences of opinion. Cheever did not choose to meet his opponents on a half-way basis, and is therefore partially responsible for the distressing state of affairs within his church. His one-track mind, his intolerance, his brilliant and sarcastic pen, and his revengefulness, once he had broken with a friend, are complicating factors.

If Cheever had numerous enemies, he also possessed loyal friends, far and wide, who supported him through thick and thin. That he is not known today is due largely to the fact that he was associated with movements which no longer excite the public's imagination. William E. Channing is remembered as the apostle of Unitarianism. Cheever participated in the Unitarian controversy but only at the end without any permanent contribution. Neal Dow devoted his life to Prohibition and John Gough preached total abstinence for over forty years. Cheever's only noteworthy association with the temperance reformation was *Deacon Giles Distillery*. William Lloyd Garrison had agitated for the abolition of slavery for a quarter of a century before Cheever took a consistently radical stand against slaveholding. Cheever's brief connection with each of these movements was important but not significant enough to be recalled by later generations. Had he been a politician or a single-cause reformer of long standing, he might have earned a place in history. Yet on his own generation he made a real impression. William L. Garrison and George W. Julian have testified that none were more vehement in denunciation of slavery, or more picturesque in the descriptions of the evils of slaveholding. Lincoln once referred to him as a "Prime Minister from Jehovah." Charles Sumner, with whom Cheever was frequently associated, spoke of the minister as follows:

Cheever is one of the *iron posts* in the balustrade by which *we ascend!* You know that when a carpenter builds a staircase he inserts at intervals a certain number of iron posts in place of wood; the rest are pine, put in not for strength but only for looks. The

iron posts are the real ones. Well, Cheever is one of those iron supports that I feel when I get hold of have something to rely on while I am striving to ascend the great staircase of life.¹

Of course Cheever and Sumner were kindred spirits and viewed slavery and reconstruction through the same eyes. Whether one regards Cheever as a hero or a scoundrel, for he was as thoroughly hated as he was dearly loved, depends upon whether there is sympathy with the principles and movements which Cheever championed. If one approves of temperance and a vigorous Protestantism, laments the Government treatment of the Indians before and after the Civil War, deprecates slavery, racial discrimination and Sabbath desecration, then he will treat Cheever in a kindly light. It is certain that the minister was not the scoundrel that his enemies pictured him to be. But he was no superman either; he made mistakes, which he was not the first to admit. Nevertheless he deserves a place in American social and intellectual history which he has not been accorded by later generations. With J. Alexander Patten, it can be said:

The American pulpit has no person in it of more power of mind and force of character than Dr. Cheever. He is an original, philosophical thinker, and has always shown great moral courage in doing what he deemed to be his duty as a minister and a man.²

Perhaps the Reverend Theodore Cuyler stated it even better:

In him the evangelical pulpit found one of its most original and brilliant ornaments. He wore his faults on his forehead; but his heart was as true as steel, and wielded the 'sword of the Spirit' with a trenchant vigor, a devout humility, and yet a splendid courage that no minister of Jesus Christ in our time has surpassed.³

¹ Henry T. Cheever, *Memorabilia of George B. Cheever*, xviii of the introduction.

² J. Alexander Patten, *Lives of the Clergy of New York and Brooklyn: Embracing Two Hundred Biographies of Eminent Living Men in all Denominations, Also, the History of Each Sect and Congregation*. 'New York, 1874, 91.

³ Clipping in Cheever portfolio No. 18.

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Cheever's published works, numbering some one hundred books, articles, and pamphlets, have been invaluable in shedding light on the minister's character and his commanding position in the religious life of pre-Civil War America. The files of the *Observer*, *Evangelist*, *Independent*, and *Principia*, some one of which he served as correspondent, editor, or owner, almost continuously from 1836 to 1865, have also been invaluable. The *National Anti-Slavery Standard* was most helpful during the period of Cheever's greatest activity as an abolitionist, since it quoted copiously regarding Cheever from newspapers and periodicals all over the country.

The *Dictionary of American Biography* has been of inestimable aid with its excellent sketches of many of Cheever's contemporaries who have not yet rated full length biographies or recent critical evaluations. To a lesser degree the *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* was useful. Frank L. Mott's *History of American Magazines* has also proved very beneficial. Its statistical and historical data saved much painstaking and perhaps fruitless research.

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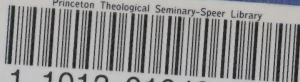
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